

THE SURVIVALIST

By

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Black two-dimensional space.

We are racing alongside a perfectly horizontal RED LINE.

It begins to curve and ascend. The red line becomes thinner as we pull back...

To reveal a BLUE LINE rising in parallel below it.

Pulling back further...

The horizontal and vertical axes of a GRAPH become visible. The red line maps WORLD POPULATION and the blue line OIL PRODUCTION.

We are moving through time - hundreds of years.

We reach the 20th century. The lines SPIKE.

We ZOOM towards the lines as they race up the near-vertical face of an exponential curve.

UP...

UP...

The blue line - OIL PRODUCTION - begins to level off.

Flatten.

The red line - WORLD POPULATION - keeps racing up.

The blue line dips into decline. It forms a smooth, elegant curve downwards that perfectly mirrors its ascent - what mathematicians would call a *bell curve*.

We move closer to the red line, still spiking...

It begins to level off...

The red line CRASHES.

DOWN.

DOWN.

DOWN.

Curving...

Levelling off...

Horizontal again.

AS BEFORE: A red line bisecting a black screen.

MATCH FADE TO:

EXT. A FOREST - DAY

The HORIZON LINE is blurred but visible behind rows of trees.

We are creeping up the incline of a small hill, rolling over velvet green ferns, rotting branches, jet-black soil.

The gentle murmur and buzz of lifeforms. Dank gloom clings to the forest floor.

Out of the murk... a white slither of luminescence.

The wispy root and cap of a MUSHROOM, growing under the roots of a tree.

TITLE OVER:

Winter

A grubby hand plucks the mushroom.

It's brought to bearded mouth. Nostrils flare, sniff the wide rim of the speckled cap.

The trained eye would recognise it as the fruit of the fungus *amanita phalloides*, but it is more widely known by the colloquial name of-

The mouth BITES into it.

... no matter, now.

The mouth chews slowly, tongue letting taste take form.

A bigger bite, devouring half the cap. Pink eyes close, water in pleasure. *Nourishment*; the eater is half-starving.

But he knows to save it. He wraps the uneaten part in plastic. Scoops the rest of the trove and wraps them as well. He puts them all in what would have been a gym bag in a former life.

Then he gets back on his feet and continues uphill...

FADE TO:

The FORAGER making a trail through undergrowth.

He is 38, but looks ten years older. He's unwashed, ravenous, tramp-like - except his eyes aren't grey and washed out, they're keen and alive and trailing the ground for more food.

He stops.

Listens.

(CONTINUED)

The sound of water.

He ambles on the spot, trying to divine the source.

He scrabbles over a fallen tree, down towards a dip in the forest. He bursts through branches to find:

A clear stream, running over rocks.

Forager skids down the bank onto his knees, cups greedy palm-fulls of water to his mouth. It taps a vein of pleasure. He splashes it onto his face, scrubbing dirt off with the heel of his hand.

His hand slows, stops - his eyes fix upstream.

Clothes, lain across the rocks.

Forager suddenly has a hunting knife in his hand. His eyes dart around, looking for shapes in the shadows, watchers in the fading winter light.

The trees stand silent and alone.

He tucks the knife back in his waistband.

FADE TO:

Forager stalks the strange smell. Quiet as you like, feet gentle against the forest floor, movements slowed to keep the friction of his coat's fabric to a whisper.

The scent leads to a clearing. Rotting stumps surround two compost heaps of branch and humus.

A glint through the trees up ahead.

He draws closer, darting between tree trunks.

Between the branches he sees the shape of a cabin emerge; light bounces off what looks like a solar panel on the roof.

His foot steps on wire.

He looks down: agricultural mesh, sunk into brown soil - a makeshift pest barrier.

Getting closer, he finds the south-facing cabin overlooks an abundant farm plot.

Mainly root vegetables, but with some hardy cabbages still above ground. It's about four hectares in area, circling around the cabin: small, enough to miss, but carefully managed for maximum yield. To the side of the plot is a long polytunnel to house less hardy planets, and a cold frame for seeding nearby.

(CONTINUED)

Forager stays in the darkness. He studies the window of the cabin, watching for The Other.

Then he steps onto the soil. His hands dig deep and pull up... a turnip. He pulls out more, stuffs them in his bag. Carrots. Rhubarb.

He tramples the mesh, pulls out one of the cabbages. His bag is full, so he grabs it in both hands.

He races to tree cover again, taking a different route downhill, eyes over shoulders.

The cabin disappears from view.

Satisfied, he allows himself a mouthful of the raw, dirty cabbage. His yellow incisors sink into the leaf...

... and his foot steps on a MANTRAP.

Metal jaws SNAP into his leg.

He topples forward into the dirt. The cabbage rolls downhill.

His hands feel down his leg, find the metal... he looks down to see the jaws dug deep in below the knee. Blood laps onto the metal grill.

He looks away. His mouth lets out a thin, breathy wail - he bites his finger, choking off the scream.

He looks at the device; an antique, oversized steel poacher trap. He finds the grips to open the vice have been filed off.

He reaches to some of the exposed teeth and gets his hands between them. The vice and his hands are slick with blood. He pulls the jaws open, with all the malnourished strength he has.

He gets it an inch, a little more. He heaves, trembling with exertion.

Another inch.

His hands SLIP...

The jaws SNAP shut, sink deeper into his leg.

He CRIES out this time.

Tears down his face.

Shallow breaths. Shallow breaths becoming something deeper. Nausea.

He throws up. His vomit is watery, acrid spittle.

He has to lie beside it.

FADE TO:

The light is dying now.

In his misery, he realises he's not alone.

The Other is uphill. He wears black gloves and a windbreaker, and holds a double-barrelled shotgun with steady aim.

He is the SURVIVALIST. His face reads about 35, beneath an overgrown, man-in-the-woods beard.

Slow as you like, Survivalist edges downhill, gun always trained on his quarry's head.

Forager slips his hand behind his back. He's trembling, fly in web fearful.

Survivalist crouches in front of him, just out of swing range. He leans closer, reaching for the bag...

... Forager finds the knife isn't in his waistband. Fingers dab the ground, desperate, trying to find the handle.

Survivalist opens the bag. He begins taking out the vegetables Forager stole. Turnips. Carrots. A rhubarb.

Deeper in, he finds a hard cover Bible. A plastic lighter. A crusted driving license - it takes Survivalist a couple of glances to confirm the man in the portrait is the same as the wretch in the trap.

Some foraged food - berries and nuts in a cracked jar. Survivalist sets these aside for himself.

Then he finds the plastic wrapped mushrooms. He inspects the fresh white incisor marks on one. It gives him pause. He notices the vomit at Forager's side.

Forager follows his eyeline.

The botanical name is amanita phalloides...

Survivalist tosses the mushrooms to Forager's side.

... but the more colloquial name is Death Caps.

Forager retches. He shoves fingers deep in his mouth. Retches more. Thick spittle sticks to his lips. Nothing of substance.

The forest murmurs. The jaws in his leg a distant memory.

Forager gasps for air.

Then his breath slows.

Past the shock. A muscle somewhere, deep down, the one that's kept him straining with every sinew to stay alive, relaxes a little. Winding down.

Survivalist puts everything back in the bag. He takes it with him and he starts back up the hill.

He pauses. Stoops and picks up something.

He tosses Forager's knife back to him.

...

The trees are black fractals against the deep blue sky. The sounds of the forest night; owls, buzzing insects, swaying trees. And beneath it all, the low, fading rasp of the Forager.

This could be the first night. Could be the second.

Forager's vomit splattered face stares up into space. Even in the dim starlight, the lividity of his skin is ghastly and visible.

With a sudden decisiveness, he reaches with the knife and cuts hard. He looks away from the pumping artery and focusses on the sky above.

You can really see the stars in this world; no light pollution to block them out. They seem bright and close enough to touch.

He looks up into the sky - into us.

Some personal irony comes to mind, and he grins.

MATCH CUT TO

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Daylight on Survivalist's face, staring at the ceiling - into us.

Thinking of the task at hand.

He gets out of bed, military-discipline. He unbuttons his thermal one-piece and steps under his 'shower' - a basin beneath a nozzled pipe from the solar panel heated water above. He rubs the water on his skin. No soap, obviously.

He dresses; two pairs of socks, patched and sown. Jeans. Shirt over the thermals, black polo-neck jumper over the shirt.

(CONTINUED)

He eats cold food direct from saucepan on his metal hob. A mash of turnips and potatoes. It looks neither tasty nor nutritious, judging from his skin in the morning light. Winter means fallow eating.

He looks out the window, glass with makeshift cling-film insulation. His gaze drifts downhill, past his farm plot.

He turns to the wall, lined with tools on hooks. Stainless steel - worn, but well maintained; spade, shovel, rake, hoe, hand tools.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

Survivalist emerges from the cabin holding a shovel, the shotgun strapped over his shoulder. (Unless otherwise specified, he always carries the shotgun with him).

He walks due west, towards an off-plot piece of land.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Survivalist sinks the shovel into soft, damp earth. He begins digging a foot deep trench adjacent to the other two buzzing compost heaps. The trench is too shallow for a grave.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist threads through trees, bending to pick twigs, small branches, stones.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Returning to the heaps, he drops his gatherings into the half-filled trench.

Now he's patting it down with soft, loose earth.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The Forager's body is still in the trap, gallows grin now a deathly grimace.

Browned blood spattered on dark clothes; bright red blood on the Forager's cheeks stands out. Been picked at - perhaps Survivalist's approach scared off a creature of the forest.

Survivalist strips the body.

His thumbs hook under the man's greasy underwear and pull them off.

He raises the Forager's jumper to his own chest; a fit.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Survivalist drags the naked body, backside covered in mud, along the periphery of the crops.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

He drags the body into the filled trench.

Shovels soil over it.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY (LATER)

It's beginning to get dark. Survivalist pats down the fresh heap.

Although the other two heaps are in various states of decomposition and atrophy, the new compost heap is uncannily similar in dimensions.

He unbuttons his jeans.

A patter of piss christens the heap.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist slams the cabin door. Locks several bolts.

He takes the Forager's belongings and crouches by the stove. He opens the King James Bible.

An inscription on the first page:

'For Mark, from your loving mother'.

He rips the page out and lights it with the plastic lighter. A short burst, conserving fuel. He uses it to light the chopped wood in the stove. Flame light suffuses the chamber.

Survivalist stands and lifts a wooden board by the wall.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

The warm light of the flame-lit windows is stark in the gloomy forest; one by one they are blacked out.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist continues through the Forager's personals in the stove light.

A bundle of very high denomination sterling notes. He burns them.

A torch with dynamo handle. He winds it; the LED bulb comes to life. He sets it aside.

Inspecting the dead man's jacket now. Pockets empty. He feels the material...

He pulls a bundle of photographs from inside the seam. Elastic band-tied family snaps... the Forager with family. A perma-tanned wife. In-laws. Barbeques.

In some, a camera-shy young woman hiding at the periphery, hand blocking lens, or back to camera. He flicks through them, tossing them into the fire as he goes.

A solo picture of the young woman; a put-on smile as she relents to the sprung-upon camera, pretty but not beautiful.

He sets it aside and thumbs through the other photographs - finds two more of her.

He tosses the rest into the stove. His face is bright in the flame-flare, staring into her image.

FADE TO:

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Survivalist digs over a stretch of barren winter plot.

He stamps shovel into dry topsoil, tipping it into a trench and creating a new cavity in the process. He works backwards, turning the soil along a given strip. It's hard, heavy work.

He scoops compost from a wheelbarrow and layers it over the broken earth.

A piece of yellow-white bone juts out of the soil.

His shovel slices it deep into the ground.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist sets damp clothes on bare branches to dry. He dips a heavy bucket in the stream and fills it.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Survivalist climbs a ladder against the cabin wall. He hoists the water bucket in one hand.

At the roof, he tips the water into a funnel for his solar heating panels.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Survivalist squats near a tree, reading the King James Bible.

He squints at the text. The strange language, world, rules, laws.

He tears a page off.

Wipes.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Survivalist lifts a shoebox into the light of the rear window. Inside are rows of small envelopes.

He flips through the handwritten crop names; Marrow, Leek, Comfrey, Runner Bean... Onion.

He pulls it out.

Survivalist sets a measuring stick across a large, soil-filled seed tray.

He lays seeds across the soil at regular intervals.

He fingers seeds into the soil.

He lifts the seed tray to a lower surface. Unbuttons his flies.

Waits.

Nothing comes out.

Idling, he looks around the seed room walls. Old, yellowed agricultural posters. Plant guides. Nutrition charts.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist shuffles to the table top, hoisting his trousers with one hand, chap still out.

He downs some water direct from a jug.

As he sets it down on the table, he sees the photographs of the woman. His gaze holds on it.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Standing over the seeds again.

Not a drip.

He flexes his penis vainly.

His expression changes, a different kind of frustration emerging.

With some hesitation, he takes out the picture of the young woman from his shirt pocket.

He flexes his penis more.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist scrubs cum off his hand in a basin.

He walks through to the seed tray again.

After a moment's hesitation, a post-coital piss begins to patter.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Heavy rain slides down the roof onto the ground in front of the cabin.

Survivalist, in slicked raincoat, digs drainage trenches down the incline of the farm plot.

Water floods down the trench and splashes against his shovel.

...

The rain has stopped.

Survivalist sits in the doorway, a blanket cloaked over him, shivering in the cold. He spits on his hands and rubs them warm.

...

(CONTINUED)

It is near dark. Survivalist looks into the dark blue of the sky. He goes inside. Through the doorway, we can see him tear a page out of the bible, using it as fire kindle for the stove.

He closes the door and blocks the windows out. Smoke emerges from the chimney, almost imperceptible against the deep blue of the sky.

MATCH FADE TO:

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

The sky, day-lit but overcast.

On the soil below, Survivalist is on his knees, methodically weeding the ground with a hoe. He creeps across the narrow walkway, and keeps his boots anchored in the air to avoid spreading soil from one bed to another.

He finds a hard root-weed jutting out of the soil next to his potatoes.

He takes a hoe from his side and cuts at the weed. He pulls at the split end, but finds the deeper root keeping it in place. It is a complete bastard to take out.

Survivalist pulls the root again... tight. It cuts into his fingers.

He grunts and lets go. The root hangs limp in his fingers. He idles, looking up at the trees.

Heavy breath and the sound of birds.

He leans forward and pulls it again...

A hand touches his shoulder.

He STARTS, rolls forward onto the soil.

He spins and brings up the gun into...

EMPTY SPACE.

No one there.

He tilts the gun around - strains neck and gets back onto his feet. Tense, trigger aware.

He breathes out the shock.

Then he kneels again - a quick look around...

With renewed vigour, he tugs at the root. Sods spill as his red-raw grip finds purchase.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist runs his hand along bark. He looks at a young tree near the edge of a clearing.

He checks the angle of the trunk and uses a slicked thumb to test the wind.

His axe SLAMS into the bark.

He cuts an angle into the side facing the clearing, where the tree will fall.

EXT. COLD FRAME - DAY

Survivalist uses a hand-trowel to create sinks in the soil.

He gently presses the sprouted onion seeds into the sinks, careful not to damage the roots.

INT. FARM, FOOD STORAGE BIN - DAY

Darkness, split by blinding light as the heavy wooden lid is opened. Survivalist gazes in on-

Bags of vegetables, strings of dried onions, dried garlic, dried herbs.

He hoists out a bag of potatoes.

EXT. FARM, FOOD STORAGE BIN - DAY

Survivalist lays the potatoes out on a plastic sheet. He sorts through them, sniffing them closely.

He ponders on one - squeezes it. Rot. He chuckles it aside.

He works intensely, and doesn't seem to notice a figure standing in the woods nearby.

He finds a slug nestling on the underside of a potato. He picks it off and sets it on the ground.

His hand freezes.

He looks over his shoulder. Studies the Figure... a GAUNT LADY, black eyes etched out above stark cheek bones.

Survivalist shows no surprise.

Slowly... with effort... he turns away from the Gaunt Lady, and returns to working on the potatoes.

FADE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist carries a basket in a clearing near dead trees.

He reaches behind a rotting trunk... picks a troop of small, red mushrooms.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

Survivalist thumbs small shrooms into his mouth, one by one.

He is lying with his back hard against a tree. He is slow and methodical, chewing them slowly. His expression is drowsy and still; he stares into the dark corridors between the illuminated trees. A gentle breeze makes the presence of the forest felt.

He stretches out his hand and spans fingers against the glittering forest light. Light breaks and hides behind his tilting hand.

Everything is now sufficiently vivid...

He takes the dog-eared picture of the woman from his shirt pocket. He loosens his trousers, staring at her.

Her details - the water in the background - the scruff of her shirt - almost seem alive.

His breath becomes heavy and rhythmical through his nostrils. The photo trembles with the beat of his other hand.

It stills.

The Gaunt Lady stands some distance away in the clearing, staring. Survivalist ignores her, and returns focus to the photo.

The image is now grey and inanimate.

Survivalist looks up; The Figure is suddenly closer, eyes wide open, her gaze unyielding.

Survivalist stands and hoists his trousers.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Survivalist sits on a garden stool and looks at the picture once again. His breath grows heavier.

The Gaunt Lady stands nearby.

(CONTINUED)

Survivalist tries to continue, fixing eyes on the vivid picture-

He stops. He stands and waddles towards the cabin, trousers at ankles. The Gaunt Lady's gaze follows him.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Lying on the bed, holding picture above him, Survivalist strains to get himself aroused.

The Gaunt Lady ambles up the farm, stepping into view beyond the door frame.

Survivalist grunts, gets up and SLAMS the door.

BLACK

FADE UP

EXT. FOREST - DAY

An AXE chops through wood. Survivalist hitches a boot against the stump, pulls out the axe-blade.

He SMASHES the axe in again. The wood splits completely this time.

This is slow, wearying work.

Another piece, holding it in place...

He SLAMS the axe.

His setting hand SLIPS.

His chopping hand is already raised, ready to harry more wood.

The axe wavers above his wrist. The adrenaline of the near miss translates into something else...

He considers the cut. He raises the axe.

Bird chatter. Sun corridors. A breeze against the young leaves.

Slowly... he lowers the axe.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist pushes firewood through the grill of the stove.

He takes the now marbled and dog-eared photos of the girl from his pocket.

Tears them into pieces. Throws them inside the grill.

Survivalist stares at the torn fragments of the woman's features, lain on wood kindle. He lights them.

They warp and curl in the heat of the flames.

SLOW FADE TO

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Grey light. Survivalist makes a fresh track through the forest. (He avoids making regular tracks which might leave a trail).

He reaches the stream - his clothes lain on rocks. Crouching, he holds up a white shirt.

Something strange; in this light, it almost seems *pink*.

His gun is up, elbow raised to keep the range good and wide. His back finds the bank. He glances and aims, doing visual clearance of his surroundings.

He swings gun behind him.

No movement, except the water at his feet and the sway of the trees.

He stands there listening. He can hear the birds. They're here. No one else is.

His gaze drifts upstream.

...

Higher in the forest, the stream as his guide, he moves tree to tree for cover. Slow, cautious progress.

A clearing ahead. He can see some torn clothes on the silty bank. Fabric stamped into the ground with heavy boot marks.

His eyes lock on SOMETHING in the stream:

The red ribs of a devoured human carcass rise into view. A bird pecks them free of remaining flesh, revealing the ghastly white bone beneath.

Survivalist sinks back into the forest.

EXT. FARM'S EDGE, TREES - NIGHT

Dark branches obscure the cabin below, marked out in stark moonlight.

This is the Survivalist's view; he is high in the trees, shotgun at the ready, hidden behind a maze of branches.

His eyes drift - he's been here a while.

He takes out the lighter and cups a flame in his hand. He burns his palm - already red and blistered.

A wince of pain... but it gives him the juice he needs for a few more minutes of concentration.

FADE TO

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The dull, metallic teeth of the mantrap, half-hidden under the foliage.

TITLE OVER:

Spring

Foliage rustles nearby. The sound of footfall.

A MACHETE tucks back the foliage and bares the teeth of the trap. The blade gently taps the metal.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist's eyes are open.

He's awake. He doesn't remember waking.

The window *clicks*.

He looks, hand slipping towards bed-partner gun.

Through the window, he sees: the mute background of forest tree line and pale morning sky.

Perhaps an insect tapping off the glass.

His hand draws away from the gun. He continues to stare nonchalantly at the distant tree line, warped by grime on the glass.

A *small stone* clicks off the window.

(CONTINUED)

He GRABS the gun, ROLLS out of bed,

He BOLTS through to-

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Survivalist runs to the the back window, scans the back garden.

Grass, the near forest; otherwise clear.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

He pulls a raincoat over his naked body and pockets a handful of shells.

Another STONE clicks off the window.

He slings the shotgun strap on, pushes his back against the cabin wall.

He steals a glance outside.

Two figures, murky behind the smeared glass. An older WOMAN holding that machete, and a TEENAGE GIRL crouching beside her, picking up stones.

He pulls his head back, opens the shotgun breech. A shell in each barrel.

He LOCKS the gun.

EXT. CABIN FRONT - DAY

The front door unlatches and sways open. Survivalist emerges, both hands on lowered shotgun.

The Woman is stooped at the bed, fingers in the soil. At the sight of the gun, she stands - the Girl rushes behind her for cover.

Survivalist lets the door open wide and knock against the wood. Nobody lurking behind it.

He takes a small hard mirror and holds it out the door. He scans the left side of the cabin, the right... CLEAR.

He retreats back into the cabin, and returns his aim to the ground in front of the two strangers.

The Woman sets the machete in the dirt. She is fifty-one years of age, hair preternaturally greyed. Her daughter, face masked by feral long hair, can't be above eighteen.

WOMAN

My name is Kathryn and this is my daughter Milja. We have been travelling for some time.

He doesn't introduce himself. His eyes scan the tree line behind them for shadows, figures stalking in the dark.

KATHRYN

We found the traps you laid. Perhaps you should put up warnings. But then, of course, you'd be telling people you were here.

Kathryn forces a smile on her worn, once-pretty face. He looks at her blankly.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

We are running low on supplies, gathering what we can in the forest... would you be able to spare some of your crop?

He shakes his head.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Don't expect you to simply give it away. We can offer something in exchange.

On cue, Milja unstraps her rucksack, opens it for her mother. Survivalist strains to see Milja's face, but it remains obscured by long shanks of hair.

Kathryn takes out a velvet bag. Inside is jewellery, gold bracelets, chains. Milja eyes a ring - a groom's; it holds a significance for her beyond its craft.

Survivalist shakes his head.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

One of these days, it will be valuable again. Very valuable.

He remains impassive. Kathryn puts the jewellery back in the velvet bag.

Milja takes a pair of "AA" batteries from the rucksack, hands them to Kathryn. She offers them.

Survivalist shakes head again.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

The real treasure then.

She takes out some plastic bags. They are filled with seeds.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
We have legumes, brassicas.
Strong varieties.

She stoops and sinks her fingers in the soil. Feels the sticky texture between forefinger and thumb.

Milja is left tall poppy exposed... Survivalist gets some more details from her face - an elegant nose, cheek.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
These could boost your yield.

She throws a packet of seeds to his feet. He crouches and picks it up, shotgun still at the ready.

He scans the label, searching for an expiry - none on it.

He throws the packet back to her.

She casts her hand around.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Surely you can spare something...
There seems more than enough.

SURVIVALIST
That's what-

His voice breaks. He clears his throat, speaks again - a guttural whisper.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
That's what everyone used to think.

Kathryn turns to Milja. They share a private look between themselves; Kathryn's look asks permission. Her daughter nods gently.

Kathryn slicks a thumb and rubs a patter of dirt from Milja's cheek, parting her hair in the process.

KATHRYN
Then perhaps... perhaps we could stay the night?

Milja's face is now visible. She has a dangerous beauty.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist stirs yesterday's *soupe du jour* on the cold stove. He keeps the shotgun strapped over his shoulder - and does so at all times with his guests.

Kathryn and Milja sit at his table, their eyes scanning the room. Seed charts, old agricultural ministry posters. A mouldy calendar. Milja's nostrils flare at the pungent room musk.

He sets three bowls on the table, ladles out uneven portions.

He serves Milja first. She eats as soon as it lands on the bowl.

Kathryn waits until Survivalist sits - then eats with the same numb haste as her daughter. It doesn't look like good grub, but it's the best food the visitors have had in weeks.

They eat in silence. He still has the shotgun over his shoulder.

Survivalist stares at Milja, her face mainly hidden under her long hair. An eyeball looks back at him.

KATHRYN (OFF)
Do you live alone?

Milja snorts in amusement.

Survivalist is distracted, then nods.

KATHRYN
How long?

The question weighs heavily upon him... he slips into reflection. As Kathryn speaks, we draw closer to Survivalist, running through memories, counting on fingers.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Milja and I have been living on a commune. Eight days north. It was a good set-up. While it lasted... we lost most of our crops in the last frost. It was the elderly, the elderly who passed first. We left when they stopped burying-

SURVIVALIST
(quiet)
Eight winters.

Milja looks up from her plate.

He clears his throat again and says louder:

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
Years, eight years.

His guests stare at him.

KATHRYN
You've been here *eight years*?

SURVIVALIST
No, I've been here... eleven.
I've been alone, eight.

KATHRYN
That's before...

She exchanges a look with Milja.

MILJA
Who did you live with before?

Kathryn looks at her daughter coolly for an indiscreet question.

But he looks at Milja and answers.

SURVIVALIST
My wife. My wife and my son.

They continue eating in silence.

Kathryn scrapes her plate clean with a fork, while Milja does the same with her fingers. Survivalist notices, and begrudgingly spoons some more for his guests.

MILJA
You haven't told us your name.

And he won't.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The light is dying. It is six in the evening; in a world without a grid this is when the day ends.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist opens the door from the main room and leads Kathryn inside.

This is where she will be sleeping; just enough length on the floor to do so.

He steps back to shut her in. She reaches a hand out, blocking the door with gentle force.

She can see Milja over his shoulder; lit by dim stove light, sitting on his bed.

KATHRYN

I need to ask you something.

An intimate tone - *between you and me*.

He releases the door and steps inside. She speaks quietly in a cabin too small to have private conversations.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

It's a matter of hygiene.

He looks wounded.

SURVIVALIST

... I haven't been with anyone.

KATHRYN

That's not what I meant. We don't have the facilities - *nowhere* has the facilities...

SURVIVALIST

If she gets-

KATHRYN

Do you understand?

He nods, then steps back and shuts the door.

The lock turns.

Kathryn surveys the space.

Her hands rake shelves, surfaces, looking for loose tools, devices, anything useful.

She checks the window. It's too small for her to fit through.

She paces.

She paces and she sits. Lower down, she can see the gap between the door and the floor. Flickering shadows in the stove light.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist is standing by the seed room door, looking at Milja, who sits at the end of his bed. She stares back at him nonchalantly.

She takes off her shoes with a clutter.

He follows. He clears his shoes neatly and efficiently to the side of the room. The inveterate disciplinarian.

She pulls off her socks and discards them on the floor; he puts his in a cloth wash-bag.

She takes off her jumper. He does the same, propping the shotgun by the stove.

He watches the slim cleft of her chest under her t-shirt. She takes it off as well, then her jeans, revealing her worn polyester underwear.

He steps out of his own jeans. He picks and folds them, finding distraction in the routine.

He looks back at her, standing awkwardly in his thermals. She taps the space beside her in the bed.

He sits beside her, hands on knees.

She reaches out and touches his beard. He remains stock still.

Her hand drops to her bag.

He grabs her wrist. He lifts her hand out of the bag, holding - a STRAIGHT RAZOR.

MILJA
To shave you.

He squeezes her wrist until she gasps, drops the blade back in the bag. He kicks the bag across the room.

He grabs her other wrist and pins both against the bed with one hand. He frisks her - palms running around her belly and back, between her legs, looking for anything concealed.

His palm-pats, become paws. Arousal sedates panic. A heavy erection shows through his thermals.

He releases her hands.

She unbuttons his thermals. Together they pull them off. He is naked. She grips his shoulders and sits him down on the bed.

She straddles him and runs her hand over his penis. He grabs her wrist defensively - but she calms him, taking his hand and placing it on her breast. She squeezes his hand; his hand squeezes her breast in turn. She keeps doing it until his hand develops a grip of its own.

She grinds her hips against him, underwear still on.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Kathryn stares at the moonlight through the windows. She can hear the faint squeak of the mattress.

FADE TO:

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist lies naked beside Milja, who lies with her back to him. His belly is wet.

He looks at the back of her head, greasy hair pooling on the mattress. He pushes his fingers along the mattress and touches her hair gently.

She feels the movement and turns slightly.

MILJA

Can I sleep in my mother's room?

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Milja lies in her mother's arms in the tight space. She rubs her daughter's shoulders gently. Moonlight falls on them through the rear window.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist lies alone, awake; eyes on the ceiling and burning with thoughts.

He looks at Milja's shirt - crumpled on the ground.

He steps out of bed and picks it up. Brings it to his nose and breathes in the fabric.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

The doors unlocks and opens suddenly, waking Kathryn and Milja. Survivalist stands in the doorway, shotgun strapped over shoulder.

They sit up, draw close.

He turns and walks outside, leaving the door open.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

Milja and Kathryn emerge from the cabin into the chill spring air.

Survivalist is at the far end of the plot raking weeds with a pick hoe. They exchange wary looks.

Milja observes the vegetables; the scale, the drainage, the cleared soil. She trudges towards the tree line.

SURVIVALIST

Toilet?

(she nods)

Heaps are over there. Use your nose.

She disappears into the tree line, leaving Kathryn alone with Survivalist.

KATHRYN

She likes you.

He tenses, hesitating with the pick hoe for a moment. Then he hacks at the ground again.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

She's rather shy about it, I think. But one can tell. Do you like her?

He doesn't answer.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Would you like to keep seeing her?

She ambles closer to him, gazing round the farm.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

We could clear more land. More hands to manage it.

SURVIVALIST

Farm is small for a reason.

KATHRYN

To keep it out of sight. But we still found it. A few extra hectares isn't going to make you any more visible. Meantime, we can use your stores, whatever surplus-

SURVIVALIST

It's not surplus. It's security. Cold snap. Blight. Raiders.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

More hands on deck then. For
stormy weather.

SURVIVALIST

I've managed so far.

KATHRYN

You've been lucky.

He SLAMS the hoe into the ground.

SURVIVALIST

Luck had nothing to do with it.

He stands and walks away from her.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist splashes into the water. He kneels and dips
two hands deep as the cold rocks, brings water to mouth.

A flurry of movement downstream - his shotgun is to hand
instantly.

He sees Milja, pulling up her trousers.

His gun is down as quick as it was raised.

She stands, zips herself.

SURVIVALIST

You can't stay here.

She climbs up the bank. At the top, she looks down at him,
head tilting in a girlish way.

MILJA

I'll always wonder what you
looked like.

Self-conscious, Survivalist looks down into the stream. In
the shimmering reflection, his thick, beast-like beard. He
looks back up toward her. A flush of something he hasn't
felt in years...

She raises her fingers, to indicate she's going for her
bag. She takes out the razor slowly, light bouncing from
the stream onto its shiny silver.

His hands slip to the stock of the gun again.

She folds the knife back in its case, and throws it to
him. His hands drop the gun and catch it, off-guard. The
shotgun swings on the strap.

MILJA (cont'd)

If you're worried about deep cuts, it's sharp enough to scar, perhaps. But no deeper.

He inspects the sharp of the blade, runs it bloodlessly against his skin.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist sits with a rigid back to the window. Milja rubs hot water over Survivalist's beard. Her fingers smooth and damp his hairs gently, fingertips touching the skin of his neck.

She clips at the beard with scissors.

After a while, it is clumps of uneven hair, patches of skin showing. She dips the hot water with her fingers and wets his hair again. His head bobs gently under her control.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

Kathryn spies the scene from the window.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja sharpens the razor on a wet stone. She dips it in a bowl of solar-warmed water.

Survivalist breathes sharply through his nose.

She brings the blade up to his neck. His hand snaps up, but she intercepts his wrist firmly. Puts it by his side again.

She presses the knife along his cheek, pressing the skin tight with her fingers. Then she slides it down.

Next stroke is closer to his throat. She pulls his forehead back gently, and slides the knife under his neck.

She angles the knife carefully against his Adam's apple...

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

A spade SLICES into compost. Survivalist heaves up the dark, steaming humus.

SURVIVALIST

We toss them every three days.

He's clean-shaven, demonstrating for Kathryn and Milja.

EXT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist uses a sparker - an artificial, fuelless fire device - to light kindle in front of the stove. Low, grey smoke begins to snake out. He leans forward and blows it gently. A flicker of flame...

The tiny, handmade fire intrigues Milja, until Survivalist puts it out with a poker.

SURVIVALIST

Don't light fires during the day.
Smoke means fire. Fire means food.

EXT. FOREST AT EDGE OF CLEARING - DAY

Survivalist chops at a tree. Kathryn digs up some of the stumps nearby, clearing more land.

Milja watches Survivalist beat the bark white, until it tilts...

The tree CRASHES into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist carefully lifts lain foliage from the metal grill of a mantrap.

Milja and Kathryn observe, memorise the surroundings.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Survivalist buttons his trousers. He looks around to see if he is being watched.

He crouches, opens the Bible at his feet.

He takes out his hunting knife and DRIVES it into the pages.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist portions out stew for three. Four scoops for him; two each for them. There is a little left in the pan.

He empties it into Milja's bowl. A slight smile, which she doesn't return; instead she spoons some extra into her mother's bowl.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Kathryn paces in small circles in the cramped confines of the room. Silence from beyond the locked door.

She steps carefully towards it. She listens - movements, slow murmur of a voice, or perhaps a dull gasp.

Her hand rubs shoulder, kneading out tension. It slips to her breast, then presses across her chest to the other. She clenches fist and bites upon it.

The door unlocks. Kathryn steps away from it quickly as Milja is ushered in.

Survivalist shuts, bolts the door. Kathryn takes Milja into her arms and kisses her head.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn's wrist runs against the long stalks of forest flowers.

She stoops and parts some tall grass. A few sprigs of tarragon grow in a clump.

She scoops them out by the roots and brings them to her nose. Closes her eyes as she smells them, presses the stalks against her neck, fingers rubbing gently against collar bone.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist cooks a stew for lunch. Kathryn steps through the doorway. She looks over her shoulder at Milja, working downhill.

KATHRYN
Tough, isn't she?

He meets her eyeline, then continues cooking.

She steps beside him.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Perhaps you would prefer a
different dish, on occasion.
Something from stores.

He looks at her.

SURVIVALIST
I like fresh food.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN
Doesn't everyone?

She takes the spoon from his hand - a moment of touch. She drops the sprig of herbs into the broth.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
But in the hands of a more experienced cook... even working with quite ordinary ingredients... through the seasonings, the technique... they can be made quite satisfying.

She holds up a spoon for him to taste, catching some of the fresh herbs on the spoon.

SURVIVALIST
She doesn't complain.

KATHRYN
It's not in her nature.

He tries a taste.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
I am of a certain age. You could have me any way you wanted. No risk of consequence.

Milja is at the doorway, kicking dirt off her shoes. The moment breaks up.

Kathryn offers a scoop to Milja.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
I found some tarragon. Try some?

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

The first signs of spring planting show in the soil.

FADE TO:

Late afternoon, dismal light. Survivalist and Milja are on their knees, fingering in the seeds of a distant summer crop. Painstaking, back-aching work.

Milja feels a pang of faintness. She rubs her forehead, pulls her foot up and rests on the bedding walkway.

SURVIVALIST
(not looking up)
Keep going.

She lifts a leg, sullen. No.

(CONTINUED)

Kathryn observes from another end of the plot, seeing how this will play out.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

Get. Up.

MILJA

I'm tired.

He gets to his feet. He grabs her by the shoulders and brings her arms to the soil. He puppeteers her hands back into sowing. His fingers push hers into the dirt, gradually building up to autonomous motion, if not enthusiasm.

His voice is a rasp in her ear.

SURVIVALIST

Sometimes when I'm doing this, and I'm getting tired, and my back aches, and the cold is biting my fingers...

He continues to guide her. Perhaps enjoying the touch of her skin.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

I feel the hand of my father upon me. Like he's standing right behind, with his shovel. I'll get the lumps if I don't finish. I'll be aching to stop, but I'll get the lumps. I feel his eye, and I keep sowing. And I keep digging. Until it's done.

He lets go of her roughly and returns to his patch. Begins fingering through the soil with the same methodical focus.

She ferrets a glance at her mother, then at him. He looks slightly different to her now, in the fading light.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Kathryn sinks a pitchfork into the humus. She heaves and tosses dirt to the top of the heap.

She stands straight and wipes her brow. Hard work.

She jags the fork again into the compost. It snags on something as she pulls it out; a knuckle of bone caught between the prongs.

It swings long and yellow and broken at one end of the fork.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

A streak of moonlight across the dark of the cabin. Milja is asleep, head resting on Survivalist's chest.

She wakes. She adjusts to her surroundings; not her mother's room, but his. He stirs in his sleep, a hand slipping round her shoulder.

She stills and sets her head down on his chest again.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn, bearing shovel, walks with Milja towards the heaps.

KATHRYN

You stayed with him last night.

Milja looks at her mother defensively.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

That's good. He'll trust you more.

Kathryn does a quick scan for prying eyes, then scrapes away a thin covering of soil on the ground. She exposes the femur, a piece of skull plate, teeth.

Milja steps back, hand to mouth.

MILJA

He told us what to expect.

KATHRYN

Fresh bones in that pile. But look at these.

Kathryn pokes a few thin white bones with a stick.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Small bones, milk teeth.

She pokes another few remnants.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

These are adult. But look at the colour and rot... they went in the ground the same time.

MILJA

We don't know what happened.

Kathryn scoops the fragments and drives them back in the heap.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN
True.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The three eat in silence at the table.

KATHRYN
What sort of animal... you catch
in those traps of yours?

Milja shoots her a look.

SURVIVALIST
Squirrels. Rabbits.

KATHRYN
Bigger game?

SURVIVALIST
Foxes. Sometimes.

KATHRYN
Stealing food.

SURVIVALIST
Foxes steal.

KATHRYN
But you can't eat them. All
gristle.

SURVIVALIST
Good for compost.

KATHRYN
Same thing, though? Same thing in
the end.

He shrugs, nonchalant.

SURVIVALIST
We're always someone else's shit.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Kathryn and Survivalist at the beds. Inspecting for pests,
signs of rot.

He finds a thick weed. It's stubborn and won't come loose
under his strained tugs. The shotgun, strapped over
shoulder, dips into the dirt as he stops.

He sets the gun down on the walkway. His hands pull at the
root... it breaks from the soil in long, white shoots.

Survivalist reaches for the shotgun strap.

His hand finds absence.

He turns to see Kathryn stepping away from him, raising the shotgun with both hands. She knows how to hold it.

It is level, not quite aiming at him. Her hand runs up the wood, towards the cock.

But her hands stills. She holds the gun looser now, as if inspecting it.

KATHRYN

Blanch twelve-bore. Vintage. The sort my father used to use, for pheasants. You find this on the same estate that had those poacher traps?

Silence. He's still crouched over the beds, and she's still holding the gun.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

He used to let me hold it, when I was a girl. Sometimes I got to shoot our supper.

SURVIVALIST

Then you know it's not loaded.

A moment of stillness.

She smiles and hands him the weapon by the barrel.

KATHRYN

You can tell by the balance.

He snatches it from her, straps it over his shoulder.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

What's the point of carrying it if-

He takes a shell from his right jacket pocket, opens the barrel, slots shell, locks it, cocks it. It takes about two seconds.

He holds it low and at her gut.

SURVIVALIST

Accidents happen.

She tries to remain calm and not break the fiction of her curiosity over malice.

He breathes deeply through his nose, primed to shoot.

Then he turns and stomps off towards the thick of the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist brushes branches and leaves from his face as he breaks a new path through the forest. He lunges over tripping roots and knee-high nettles, letting the forest wear down his anger.

A vista opens up into a clearing of the forest - he sees Milja almost right away. She lies in the basin-like sink of a hollow tree, as if an innocent of the woods. She is wearing earphones, her figure sunk into the lush foliage that has found life in the roots.

She senses him, looks up to his silhouette against the hillside.

He makes his way down towards her.

He stands over her. She stops the music on her music player and holds it out to him.

He crouches and inspects it; it has been jerry-rigged to run off AA batteries. The touchscreen interface is not intuitive to him - been so many years. He toys with it, noobish.

MILJA

Two pairs of batteries left. When they run out... the rest is silence.

His brow creases at the interface.

He sits beside her.

She silently demonstrates how to scroll and select tracks. Memories of a world of such devices silence him.

MILJA (cont'd)

You like the 80s?

SURVIVALIST

Don't remember them very well.

MILJA

I mean the music.

He shrugs.

She pulls the earphones from her ears and affixes them to his. She takes the mp3 player and scrolls for a track.

She selects KISSING THE PINK - THE LAST FILM.

(CONTINUED)

A military drum-beat cues up before a shrill whistle, tinny, through the headphones. Survivalist is rapt by the cacophony of sounds; Milja observes him coolly.

He takes the earphones off.

SURVIVALIST

You want mushrooms?

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Kathryn surveys the space. Figures out a plan of attack.

Then she begins. Obvious places first. The shelves. Tools, seeding guides, seed guides, medical texts, gauzes, nick-nacks, cutlery. A jumble of utility and memory.

She pulls out several picture frames.

All eerily empty, cracked.

She sets them down. Where else?

She takes a dynamo torch and cranks a flickering beam of light under the stove space. She feels under it for crevices, alcoves.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist and Milja walk through the dim, hazy forest. Survivalist keeps his eyes low, inspecting roots, fern shades, clumps of bark.

He sees something at once invisible, then suddenly clear to Milja when he focuses on it. A troop of brown mushrooms against the light of a fallen branch.

Milja looks for permission; he nods. She bends and picks one to eat.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

Under a dripping bark, the white, wispy frame of a DEATH CAP. It grows in a small troop.

Survivalist's face is close-by. He's squatting with Milja, looking at it. He plucks it out and hands it to her. He shows her the dark streaks under the cap.

SURVIVALIST

First twelve hours, you won't notice anything. Then you'll get stomach aches. Diarrhoea... Then it gets better. You think you're

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
through the worst. Within two
days you're dead.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

Deeper into the forest. They have opened up their jackets
as the midday heat warms the forest.

Survivalist scans the low trees, turns to find Milja
crouching. She's found a small troop of red-capped,
tall-hatted mushrooms.

She picks one and looks at Survivalist.

MILJA
So will this eat my liver?

He takes it from her hand and eats it.

SURVIVALIST
No. But it will make you trip.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Kathryn lifts up a seed tray to see if anything lies
beneath. Empty.

She opens the seed cupboard - looks through the folders
and dusty bags. She feels down the back of the drawer -
clutches something.

Brings back a small, rattling box. She opens it rapidly -
perhaps what she's looking for. Her shoulders sag,
disappointed: inside are gold sovereigns and silver coins
in plastic dealer bags with carat certificates.

But something else in the box catches her eye. She
reaches...

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Kathryn steps across the wooden floor and surveys the
space again.

The bookcase, the shelves, the stove, the bed. All
searched.

Shit.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

A clearing of dazzling bluebells. The buzz of bumblebees and flirting insects.

Milja holds her hand out in front of her, suddenly interested by the shapes the lines her fingers can make. Survivalist is sunk out of view in the flowers.

MILJA

You still haven't told us your name.

He lies back, hiding from view beneath the flowers.

MILJA (cont'd)

I need to call you something.

SURVIVALIST (OFF)

Says who.

MILJA

Says... What if I see a tree falling? How do I...

She trails off as if losing focus. Then the verb swims back...

MILJA

How do I address you then?

She looks to the rim of the sunken impression of flowers he's in. Waits for an answer.

SURVIVALIST (OFF)

Shout which direction. I'll roll.

MILJA

I think I'll call you... Leonard.

Survivalist sits up, shakes his head.

SURVIVALIST

(serious)

No.

MILJA

What's wrong with Lenny?

SURVIVALIST

Lenny? That's even worse.

MILJA

You don't like it?

(...)

Then tell me your real name then.

He stands and shakes off the mild stupor.

(CONTINUED)

SURVIVALIST
Lenny it is.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja washes vegetables in a basin and Kathryn slices them. They speak in whispers.

KATHRYN
No clothes, no pictures, but
empty frames... as if they never
existed.

MILJA
Memories slow you down.

KATHRYN
And I found this....

Kathryn takes a DIAMOND RING from her shirt pocket.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Your father kept his, to the end.

Survivalist comes into view through the window, walking towards the cabin. Kathryn slips the ring back in her shirt pocket and continues cutting vegetables.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Fork scrapes against bare plate.

The three at supper.

MILJA
He's got a name, now.

KATHRYN
(to Survivalist)
You told her?

MILJA
He let me make one up... "Lenny".

Kathryn smiles. Milja tries to suppress her grin. Survivalist senses a private joke but says nothing.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist squats in the stream. His hands scoop into the water and bring cupped handfuls to his chest and arms. He trembles from the sharp cool on his skin.

Kathryn watches him from trees by the bank. She observes his naked form casually... his jacket, shotgun lie on the bank nearby.

She steps away, quietly, into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn gathers twig and kindle. She lights the pile with a sparker. A dull, pale flame erupts; silky smoke arises.

She takes out a cigarette, half-smoked but not yet a stub. She lights it on the flame and takes a slow, first drag. Then she begins puffing deep and fast.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist palms water over his head.

He doesn't notice the thin plume of smoke rising above the trees behind him.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The cigarette is worn down now.

Kathryn scuffs away at the kindle with her feet, clearing the more obvious incendiary evidence but leaving the fire intact. She drops the cigarette in the flames.

She walks back towards the stream.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Through the branches, Kathryn watches Survivalist, hands dipping in the water.

He becomes very still.

So does Kathryn. Has he sensed she's there?

Survivalist's hands remain frozen in the water. All senses dim to heighten his sense of... smell.

He stands bolt upright, and looks around the tree line methodically. He's already gathering clothes, pulling on trousers, boots. No time for socks.

Survivalist spots the smoke and grabs his gun - Kathryn breathes 'fuck' - and runs topless towards the smoke.

She is left alone with the sound of the stream.

Then she sees the jacket.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

BOOTS stamp the fire out. Survivalist grunts with effort. The ground is moist and has contained the flames.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Kathryn steps down to the waterside. She slips a hand into the jacket's pocket. They return with two shotgun shells.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn bursts through trees to find Survivalist. He picks over the embers of the fire with a stick.

He finds the charred cigarette butt.

He pinches it between two fingers and turns to display it to her. Her face pleads contrition.

KATHRYN

I've only three left. Have them
so seldom, must have forgot to-

His look is unforgiving.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

It was a mistake.

He SHOVES her backwards - up against the bark of a tree. She gasps a little. Her face, his furious eyes inches apart.

She smirks.

He shoves her again, drags her back painfully against the bark. His face is right in hers, hot breath against her cheeks.

She pulls the back of his hair. He lets her pull it tight for a moment - then lets go of her.

She sinks down the trunk as he walks away.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist yanks off boots and pulls on socks.

He lifts his jacket and puts it on. Pats the shell pocket instinctively; feels some weight.

He scales the bank, making his way back to the farm.

EXT. HIGHER LAND - DAY

The last wisps of smoke fatten above a hill in the forest.

The watcher (40s) stops to orientate himself against the smoke. He takes off his woolly hat, scrapes yellow fingernails against a rash on his scalp.

Then he pulls hat back on and sets off downhill.

FADE TO:

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja cooks a broth in the amber glow of twilight. Kathryn walks into the cabin and sidles up beside her. They both can see Survivalist looking up from his work on the plot, glancing at them occasionally.

Kathryn samples the broth with one hand, discretely showing Milja the stolen shotgun shells in her other.

Their body language is that of chattering cooks; Kathryn sets the spoon back and nods.

KATHRYN

When he sleeps... where does he put the gun?

MILJA

Against the wall. By the bed, usually.

They see Survivalist stand and dust down his knees.

KATHRYN

Do you remember how to load one?

MILJA

It was a long time ago.

KATHRYN

You remember. With papa's gun. He taught you how.

Survivalist walks up the grass gangway towards them. Kathryn turns her back to obscure his view. She demonstrates the loading action.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

You open the breech. You slot in both shells. You lock it. You pull back the triggers, firm and hard.

(CONTINUED)

MILJA

I won't have time.

He's walking towards the cabin. Whispers now. She offers the shells to her again.

KATHRYN

Buy time. Take the gun and go outside.

Survivalist arrives through the cabin door, scraping his feet against the wood.

Milja takes the shells and slides them into her jeans pocket.

The conversation falls silent.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Milja's head rests on Survivalist, her eyes open and staring at the shotgun rested against the bedside wall.

She looks down at him; side turned towards her, eyelids still - in deep, dreamless sleep.

She gently lifts Survivalist's arm from her shoulder, slips it to her side.

She waits...

...he doesn't stir.

She sits up in bed. Looks at the shotgun beyond his sleeping figure.

She leans over him, reaching for the gun. Her fingers stretch... almost touching the barrel.

Her stomach pushes against his shoulder... he rolls slightly onto his back.

She looks down at him, arms at his shoulders.

His eyes are open. Is he awake?

His hands reach up pull her towards him. Arms lock around her.

He closes his eyes again.

After a while, so do hers.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Sunrise breaks through the tree line.

FADE TO:

Survivalist drives supporting sticks into the soil, while Kathryn measures the distance.

Milja emerges from the cabin and walks down the plot towards Kathryn. She hands her a trowel - shotgun shells cupped discretely in her hand.

Kathryn backpockets them, digs the trowel in the soil. Glancing at Survivalist - he hasn't clocked the exchange and is still fixed on his work.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Milja takes off her jeans, then her underwear. She steps down into the water.

She crouches and removes a red-stained cloth from between her legs. Washes it in the stream.

She rubs water against a streak of dried blood on an inner thigh.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Survivalist drives the last stick he's grasping into the ground. He kneels down and begins coiling a piece of string around it.

The barrel of the shotgun keeps nudging against the stick. He unslings the shotgun and sets the weapon on the ground.

Survivalist ties the string off, then takes one of the branches close at hand and sharpens it with his knife.

Kathryn straightens the sticks and strings, which provide a seed line for planting. As she does so, she is slowly moving on her knees towards the gun.

She gets within grabbing distance. She takes the shotgun shells into her hand. She is very still and contemplative, rehearsing the actions in her head. She only has one chance at this.

Survivalist stills. He leans forwards and pushes back some potato leaves to inspect something.

Kathryn's breath grows deep and shallow. One last breath before-

He picks up the shotgun, not looking back at her.

(CONTINUED)

She folds the shells back into her trouser pocket and leans to see what he's looking at.

A large, deep boot-print in the soil.

SURVIVALIST
Where's Milja?

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Milja pulls on her underwear again. Trousers and shoes.

She looks down at her face in the water. She pulls back her hair to see her face more clearly.

Runs the tip of her little finger under her eyelid... tracing a first wrinkle.

A MAN'S FACE emerges behind her. Her scream is GAGGED by a hand clenching her mouth, yellow fingernails digging into her cheek.

She squirms until she feels the cold hard barrel of a revolver against her head.

EXT. FARM'S EDGE - DAY

Survivalist bounds through the forest.

KATHRYN (OFF)
Milja!

He knows the land better than Kathryn, and soon has a steady lead in the hunt. He races through whipping, snap-back branches and his feet find sure ground.

He bursts through trees to find the stream. Milja's shoes lie at the waterside.

SPLASH... he's jumped in the water and is running downstream.

He scans the stream banks as he runs.

Kathryn emerges through the trees into the stream clearing. She sees Milja's shoes.

Grief swells... the horror of this world without Milja. But she's been in *this* world too long to let it slow her down - she leaps into the water.

Way downstream, Survivalist finds the water too deep to run through. He doubles back, scans every forest gap on the muddy banks for footprints.

Kathryn's voice - MILJA, MILJA! echoes upstream.

His sharp eyes catch a white, exposed piece of branch, where it's just been snapped. He mounts the bank, clearing through branches into...

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

A bluebell-filled clearing; light corridors streaming down between foliage onto the tall flowers.

Survivalist eases opens the breech of the shotgun. He reaches to his jacket pocket... feels the strange texture inside.

He finds two small, smooth stones.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

The stones SMASH into the water. Survivalist steps down into the stream, away from the clearing.

He makes his way back up the water.

Then he stops.

He looks at the useless, open weapon in his hands.

SURVIVALIST

Fuck!

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn wades desperately through virgin, unbroken forest. Her eyes flint around her.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist locks the breech of the shotgun. He straps it over his shoulder again and mounts the bank.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Survivalist steps into the clearing, holding the gun like it's ready for action.

The SNATCHER could be here. He could have gone.

Survivalist surveys the awful tranquillity. His breath begins cashing the cheques his running has made, thick and heavy through his nostrils.

He hunkers onto knees. Looks through the flowers...

(CONTINUED)

But if he could see the bird's eye view... he'd see the SNATCHER lying hidden in the flowers, pressed on top of Milja.

Snatcher's got his hand over her mouth and a revolver pressed against her temple. (It's an ancient, World War II gun, perhaps an illicit family heirloom pressed into service by catastrophe).

He raises his head above the flower-line and gets a look at Survivalist. Survivalist pivots with the gun, turning away from Snatcher's viewpoint.

Milja whelps... quiet, involuntary.

The Snatcher jabs the revolver harder against her skull.

Survivalist pretends not to have heard it, but his posture has stiffened.

He listens for more sounds...

Then Snatcher leans up...

... takes the gun from Milja's head...

... aims at SURVIVALIST, centre of mass...

... and SHOOTS HIM.

Survivalist collapses, his body swallowed by bluebells.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The shot ECHOES in the forest. Kathryn stops stock still. She changes direction and runs towards the sound.

EXT. THE CLEARING - DAY

Snatcher collapses back onto Milja, gun back to her temple.

His lips do a silent ten count.

Then he raises his head over the flowers.

Survivalist is still sunk out of view.

Snatcher drags Milja to her feet. Pushing her in front, he creeps towards where Survivalist's collapsed.

They reach the depression in the flowers - Snatcher tenses and holds Milja's mouth tighter still.

He leans forward to see:

Survivalist lying on his back, eyes closed, a bloody chest wound - *still gently pumping* - showing through his jacket.

Messy entry - Snatcher must have filed the tips of his bullets.

Snatcher's revolver hovers from Milja's head to Survivalist's face. He evaluates the killshot.

He wavers. Tilts the revolver - sees the edge of a SINGLE BULLET left in the chamber.

Snatcher waistbands the revolver and pulls out his knife, letting Milja taste the cool edge of the blade with the skin of her neck.

He forces her knees down into the dirt. He pushes her head onto the ground, straddling her. He is within striking distance of Survivalist.

He raises the knife -

Like something out of nightmare, Survivalist's eyes open wide and white.

He GRABS Snatcher's knife hand and STABS him in the neck with his own hunting knife.

Snatcher drops his blade and clutches at the knife in his neck. He gets it out after a few slippery grabs, blood pumping over his collar bone. He rolls onto the ground, choking, clasping at the gaping neck wound that's lapping blood down his throat.

As Snatcher goes about quietly dying, Survivalist tears a strip off his own bloody shirt and uses it as a weak compress against his chest wound.

Kathryn arrives in the clearing. She rushes to Milja, finding the wounded Survivalist and the pretty-much dead Snatcher by her side.

Milja nods that she's OK.

Kathryn sees the shotgun.

She picks it up. She takes the shells she's been carrying and slots it in. Cocks it.

She turns to Survivalist, who is being helped to his feet by Milja.

The revolver is in his hand.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Milja shoulders Survivalist inside. He is pale from blood loss.

Kathryn follows, shotgun strapped over shoulder.

Milja sits him down on a chair. Together they pull off the remains of his bloody shirt.

In the window light Milja gets a better look at the wound; She pours water over it, fresh blood seeping through quickly.

She gently pushes her fingers into his flesh. Survivalist clenches teeth.

Milja shakes her head - she can't find it.

She moves quickly to the shelves and takes down a toolbox.

Kathryn and Survivalist eye each other; he still has the gun in his hand, she still has the loaded shotgun slung over her shoulder.

Milja steps past her and uses the sparker to light the stove. She runs a Stanley knife under the flames.

Kathryn undoes Survivalist's leather belt. She folds it and offers it to Survivalist; he chomps down, never taking his eyes off her.

Milja kneels beside him with the knife. He tucks the revolver in his waistband and gives her the nod.

Milja pricks and inspects the wound. Survivalist's teeth clench HARD on the belt. Kathryn holds Survivalist down as Milja digs into his flesh...

Survivalist JOLTS with the pain. Kathryn restrains him with surprising strength.

Milja gets deeper inside his wound.

Survivalist's eyes water, teeth biting deep into the belt.

Milja flicks the knife. A piece of metal hits the bowl she holds and fresh blood pumps out of Survivalist's wound and the Stanley's fresh lacerations.

Kathryn pushes a compress against the wound, her face close enough to his to feel his breath.

Milja inspects the bullet with her knife. It is warped and flattened.

(CONTINUED)

MILJA

It's in one piece.

SURVIVALIST

...Get the poker.

Kathryn volunteers for this; she stokes it in the flame until it is red hot.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Light from the open wood stove flickers against the glass.

Birds FLY as a gagged SCREAM emerges from the cabin.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Milja cracks open a dusty first aid kit. She layers a piece of cotton and gauze against his wound.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

The door swings open. Survivalist waves Milja and Kathryn inside with the revolver.

Milja's look asks - me as well? He nods.

They silently step in. Kathryn hands are at the ready on the gun. She passes close by Survivalist.

He slams and bolts the door.

Over: the SOUND OF BANGING.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist - ill, overslept - unlocks the door.

The banging stops.

The door sways open and he retreats further inside the cabin. Kathryn - shotgun strapped - and Milja emerge.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Survivalist pulls open the gauze to inspect the wound. Arching his head, he sees a trail of green puss.

Not good, in a world without antibiotics.

He closes his eyes.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Survivalist trudges to the stinking, buzzing compost heaps. Flies flicker around his face.

He lies on the ground, quite still, and opens up the gauze, exposing the wound.

...

After some time, flies curl and land around the open flesh. He watches them begin to nestle around the exposed, festering wound.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The three, eating dinner. Two armed. Survivalist, gaunt and pale.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Resting on the bed, Survivalist inspects his wound with his small mirror.

Tiny MAGGOTS wriggle and curl inside. They feast on the infected tissue.

Milja watches from the open door of the seed room.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Milja and Kathryn lie in each other's arms for warmth. The door bolts and unlocks.

Kathryn is quick to the shotgun, and has it in her hands as the door opens. Milja's torch beam finds Survivalist's face; it is slicked with cold sweat. He sways on unsteady feet.

SURVIVALIST

I'm sick.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist lies in bed, two mouldy cushions stacked up against his back.

Milja washes the maggots from his wound and collects the detritus in a bowl. The infested tissue has been eaten away, but he has contracted fever. His skin is deathly pale.

(CONTINUED)

Survivalist stares at Kathryn with heavy eyes and a limp grip on his revolver. She sits across from him by the warmth of the stove, shotgun lain across her lap.

His eyes close.

Milja gently slips the revolver from his unconscious hand.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Kathryn takes a cigarette from her packet - three left - and toys with the idea of lighting it. For the moment she just lets the familiar taste hang dry on her lips.

Milja stands beside her - holds out the revolver. Kathryn inspects it curiously, then hands it back.

KATHRYN

Gone, is he?

MILJA

Going.

Kathryn idles a glance at Survivalist inside; unconscious, pale, trembling.

KATHRYN

Better this way, than through the stomach.

MILJA

Think he has a chance?

Kathryn lights the cigarette and drags deep.

KATHRYN

Well... no matter, now.

Silence of the forest night. Cricket-song, tree-sway...

A *cough* from inside. Weak, mucus-filled.

MILJA

He's useful.

KATHRYN

A third mouth, on a farm fit for one.

Inside: a hacked cough.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

...and too far gone anyway.

MILJA

No harm in trying then.

Kathryn stubs the cigarette with her thumb, replaces the remainder gently in the packet.

KATHRYN

You're getting sentimental.

MILJA

Time was, you would have found me. You're getting older.

Kathryn smiles and squeezes Milja's shoulder hard - only half affectionate.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Fire FLAMES in the stove, as a block of wood is thrown in.

Kathryn and Milja strip the Survivalist. He is drifting in and out. His revolver hand clenches absently.

He is soon naked. They drag his naked body and bunk close to the stove fire.

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

The two women fill buckets in the icy night water.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

They pour water over Survivalist's naked body. He spasms in reaction. They rub the cold liquid into his burning skin.

They pour the other bucketful.... same procedure.

He shivers.

Kathryn and Milja quickly take off their clothes. Milja eases herself on top of him first; she rubs hands friction fast over his chest, arms. She works as much of her skin against his to warm him as quickly as possible.

Kathryn, undressed, slips beside her and does the same. His eyes open - half aware of something going on - then flicker off again.

Kathryn makes eye contact with Milja as she slides across Survivalist's body.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Coats swept over naked bodies, boots pulled over bare feet, Kathryn and Milja run towards the stream again.

FADE TO BLACK

A slow, liquid light swims over us; we can't quite focus. Our wet eye-lids are achingly heavy, crusted with stasis.

Eyeballs dilate, focus slowly.

Beneath Survivalist's pallid orbits, the knowledge that he won't slip off like the other times. He looks around to see:

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The cabin, seen through burned out whites and blues from eyes closed too long.

Kathryn is cooking. He shifts - a shot of pain through his back - a gasp. He sinks back into bed.

His hand slips for shotgun, no, his revolver - gone. He feels clean, fresh sheets on the bed.

He turns his head - easier than moving body - and looks through the window. Flowers in a jam jar on the sill; Milja in the farm beyond.

KATHRYN (OFF)
Back in the land of the living?

His answer is a coarse cough.

Survivalist inspects his wound - healing. He's been out for a while.

Kathryn spoons some food into a bowl and sits beside him on the bedside chair. He force himself up against the bed board, ignoring the shooting aches and pains.

She angles a spoon of soup to his mouth. A moment's hesitation - what's in it? - then he allows her to feed him.

After some spoonfuls...

KATHRYN
Things will change a little.

She inspects his response, then offers another spoonful.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN (cont'd)

We share portions equally. The door to the store won't be locked at night. The weapons are shared.

SURVIVALIST

It's still my farm.

KATHRYN

Property rights are rather quaint, don't you think?

He coughs, gruffly.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

If you had been on your own-

SURVIVALIST

I wouldn't have got shot.

KATHRYN

Funny. She said the same thing.

She eats a spoonful herself.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

You're alive because we need each other.

She offers him another spoonful. Resentful, but hungry, he takes some.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Where are the spare shells?

SURVIVALIST

That what you kept me around for?

KATHRYN

Would have found them eventually.

He points to the bookshelf.

SURVIVALIST

Seek and ye shall find.

She sets down the bowl and takes out the Forager's Bible. She opens it to find the pages have been hollowed out, to hold three shotgun shells.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

Survivalist ambles out the door on his makeshift crutch - a long-handled spade.

Milja, kneeling over the beds, glances back at him.

MILJA

Morning.

SURVIVALIST

What are you doing?

MILJA

Seeding.

SURVIVALIST

You used the seed beds?

MILJA

No.

SURVIVALIST

Use the seed beds first.

MILJA

It's warm enough now. They don't need nursing, and it's faster.

SURVIVALIST

You're doing it wrong.

He steps down onto the foot ledge.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

Use the beds.

She ignores him and continues. His eyes crease at the bright light - but the breeze feels good against his sweaty skin.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

Use the beds.

He's saying it again, but more to himself. The breeze, Milja in front of him, the bubbling hob behind. A strange sense wafts over him... of place. His hand waves, absent-mindedly, eyes still looking towards the distant light.

FADE TO

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Milja and Kathryn trudge through the forest.

They find what they're looking for; the gnarled, rotting body of the Snatcher.

A moment's surveying, then they instinctively divide the labour. Milja pulls boots off the body. Kathryn takes off his jacket. She hesitates for a moment... unclips a WATCH STRAP from his wrist.

They begin dragging the body along the forest floor.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

The three heaps are silhouetted in the dying light.

MATCH FADE TO:

Four heaps now silhouetted against a bright sun, the oldest depleted from composting on the farm.

TITLE OVER:

SUMMER

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Late afternoon light flows from the open door to the bookcase. Kathryn runs her finger along the dusty spines of the bookshelf; plant guides. Herbals remedies. First aid guide.

Her finger stalls - one book out of place on a shelf of practical civilisation. Its title is blood red against frayed black canvas:

"COVENANT WITH DEATH"

Kathryn pulls it out - finds it illustrated with a skull and skeletal hand holding a scroll.

Kathryn sitting, reads through the book. It is anti-war treatise published in 1933, full of photographs of World War I.

Bodies and remains. Before and after executions. Hanged men and women. Death-locked faces in repose, victims of the trench, blast-hit corpses hanging broken-backed from trees.

She turns the pages; incurious, unaffected.

There is a final section, a cut black ribbon over the pages to warn the reader: 'inside is worse'.

Inside is Armenia. Pyramids of bodies, limb stacks, gloating Turks standing astride them. Endless rows of skeletons, shot children, mother and baby spiked on bayonets.

Kathryn reaches the back cover, nonchalant; she flips to the front and looks for an inscription. None, but a strange panel of pale paper. The original paper is yellowed, the fresh paper white.

Her fingers feel the paper. Detect a contour.

Her nail pricks back the edge of the paper, revealing newsprint underneath.

EXT. CABIN, THE FARM - DAY

Survivalist walks towards the cabin. He is surer on his feet - a faint hobble in his gait the only echo of his injury.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY - LATER

Kathryn spreads the newspaper and magazine clippings are spread across the table. Kathryn inspects them - a mix of subjects, publications.

She notices the writer's name is the same: LINDA TALLIS.

A shadow over the page; Survivalist stands in the doorway, blocking the afternoon sun.

He steps over her shoulder and looks at the cuttings. He doesn't recognise what they are at first...

Then his face turns.

He grabs the papers and starts ripping them apart.

She stands and touches his arm.

He continues, binding and pulling them.

He clumps the clippings together and begins ripping them apart.

Kathryn stands, taken aback.

He keeps ripping them - now quartered, resisting his opposing hands.

She touches his shoulder.

KATHRYN

Don't.

He twists the paper again.

She holds his hands. Loosens them.

He stops, breathing out his frenzy. She gently pulls the paper away.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY - LATER

Kathryn and Survivalist sit at the table, looking over the articles, half torn, realigned together.

KATHRYN

Is that your name - Tallis?

He shakes his head.

SURVIVALIST

She never changed hers, after we married.

He pulls up a small, column-sized piece of newsprint. Studies it. Shows it to her.

OIL SUPPLY IN 'STEADY DECLINE'

SURVIVALIST

This is how we knew. What was coming. Think her editor wanted a lifestyle piece, prices at the pump and where they're going sort of thing. But she went off-piste.

(he smiles, remembering)

Interviewed some experts. These guys were pretty sober people; academics, analysts... and they were *frightened*. Once you knew how oil and gas and food worked... There's a moment where you look around, see all these people driving their cars, shopping, eating... no idea their lives were held by string. And that string was going to get cut. Her editor cut it down to filler. Spiked the follow-up. Too much doom and gloom, he said. But we kept digging. Deeper we got, more people we found who knew, whole networks trying to prepare. But they didn't have the power to change anything. People who did... they were building more fucking airports.

He looks into Kathryn's eyes.

SURVIVALIST

That's when we knew we needed to find somewhere. For us and our son. Somewhere safe. Somewhere like here.

He taps the wood of the table three times. The echo holds for a moment in the gloom.

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN

Can I ask... what happened to
them?

He buries his gaze back in the book.

SURVIVALIST

What do you think.

She waits for him to continue.

But he'll be saying no more. His eyes run over the words
of his dead wife.

EXT. THE HEAPS - DAY

Ground-level view of sunrise between the compost heaps.

EXT. CABIN, FARM PLOT - DAY

Milja stands and squeezes sods off her gloves. She peels
gloves off and rubs a palm heel against her sweaty chin.

She walks towards the cabin.

INT. CABIN, FARM PLOT - DAY

The faded display of a CASIO F91W watch.

It is held by Kathryn, resting on the bed.

Milja comes in the doorway. She looks over at her mother,
lying where she would normally sleep.

Milja pulls off her muddy boots with a disruptive clamour.

Kathryn slides out and pulls on her shoes. They pass each
other as Milja slinks to the bed and rests.

EXT. CABIN, FARM PLOT - DAY

Kathryn hunkers beside Survivalist and tends to the
weeding.

KATHRYN

She's eighteen tomorrow.

SURVIVALIST

...How do you know?

KATHRYN

I did give birth to her.

SURVIVALIST

The date.

She shows him the watch.

KATHRYN

Bequeathed by our visitor.

He holds it in his hand and looks at the faded display.
Marvels.

SURVIVALIST

After all this time... still
telling it.

KATHRYN

Batteries must be running ten
years.

SURVIVALIST

At least.

(...)

Date could be wrong.

KATHRYN

Says who?

They share a smile.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

I want to make her a meal. For
her birthday.

She offers out her wrist, for the watch.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

The ingredients are rather
exotic. Would you help me find
them?

He nods - why not- and straps the watch back on her arm.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja watches them from the window.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn leads in front of Survivalist, looking skyward; he walks behind her, eyeing the perimeter and keeping his shotgun low and ready.

SURVIVALIST

What were you... when people were
things.

KATHRYN

I was a teacher.

SURVIVALIST

English, I'll bet.

KATHRYN

Economics. Pays better. Paid. I had an impoverished husband to support. A truly gorgeous man... but never very practical.

She stops and observes the high branches of a tree - a family of nests, a few crows.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Were you always... this?

SURVIVALIST

This?

KATHRYN

Survivor-type.

SURVIVALIST

I was a Dad. Stay-at-home.

KATHRYN

I had one of those.

She takes an interest in one particular tree.

She walks around the perimeter and looks for an approach upwards.

Survivalist looks up into the branches; sees an isolated nest in the high branches above.

Looking down he sees Kathryn already has a foothold, is making her ascent.

SURVIVALIST

You can't be serious.

She moves from branch to branch, adroit.

Survivalist shakes his head and keeps scanning the area.

She reaches the nest branch, which is sturdy enough to support her weight.

She inspects the nest; three greenish and pebbled eggs. She scans her surroundings for the mother bird... all clear.

She shakes each of the eggs in turn beside her ear; takes two and gently puts them in her lined pocket.

A CROW lands on the same branch. Perhaps the mother. Perhaps a fellow thief.

She looks at it; it looks back.

Kathryn begins to climb down, slowly, keeping her eyes on the bird.

FADE TO

They walk through the forest; near dark.

Survivalist touches Kathryn's shoulder - *halt*. She looks to him. He waves a hand around his nose.

She smells it too.

They look around and source a direction. Moving through branches, leaves, on guard...

They come across the REMAINS OF A FIRE in a clearing. No sign of life around - just the smouldering remains.

Survivalist crouches and cranks a dynamo torch. It illuminates boot marks in the scorched mud around the fire. Overlapping, unique imprints; several people were here.

He lights what Kathryn is nudging with a stick; a blackened oblong rib.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Torchlight marks Survivalist and Kathryn's return from the dark forest. Milja stands sentry at the door, where she has been waiting.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A pale, uneven omelette lies on a plate in front of Milja.

Kathryn and Survivalist sit opposite, studying her reaction to the dish.

Her fork picks off a corner. She raises to her mouth. Smells it suspiciously.

Bites and chews. Her face squirms with the strange texture.

She nods - it's OK.

KATHRYN

Do you remember when we used to eat eggs?

(CONTINUED)

She eats more of it, bigger pieces.

MILJA
... remembering.

She is quickly down to her last piece.

She offers it on a fork to each of them. They decline.

KATHRYN
It's for you.

SURVIVALIST
And something else as well.

His chair scrapes and he goes to the seed room. Milja surveys her mother's face for a hint, but she doesn't know what he will produce.

He returns and sets a tin can on the table.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
(lying)
Forgot I had this.

The cover is worn and faded; illegible text and red blobs.

KATHRYN
Strawberries?

SURVIVALIST
Cherries. Keep longer.

He lifts it, inspecting the lid.

KATHRYN
You even have a tin opener?

He tilts the head of the can; it has a pull tab.

He sets it down on the table and hinges the pull-tab backwards. The can should depressurise, but doesn't. He tries to jag the tab into the can. It won't go.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
We should use a tool-

He raises a hand, stoic.

He pulls the tab back with obvious strain. It won't budget. He uses his other hand to put pressure on the metal behind the tab, pulling in both directions.

The tab RIPS OFF and his thumb jags into the tab's sharp neck.

He drops the can and holds his thumb tights; cut open, oozing blood.

Kathryn immediately goes to the cabinet and takes out the first aid kit. She drags two chairs to the stove.

She washes out his cut in the cooling roof water and wraps a bandage around it.

Milja eyes her tender touch with him.

FADE TO:

Survivalist takes off his clothes in the dim stovelight of the lit stove. He peels back his bandage a little, to check how it's mending. A bead of blood runs out.

A hand runs up his arm to cup his fingers. Milja's slender figure at his side. She pulls the thumb to her mouth and sucks the blood.

He lets her, but is taken aback by her sudden possession.

She ties off the bandage, double-tight, and takes him to the bed. She shuts the seed room door in passing.

She lies him on his back and straddles him. Her nails rack along his chest. It hurts but he endures, holding off the urge to pull her hands away.

Her hand runs between legs. She guides him into her.

He reaches out to stop her, but she hold grips his hands and presses them against the bed. She kisses him with an almost tremendous force, as her hips push in and out of him.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A crow rests on branch's edge; the setting sun behind.

Its black eyes crane and peak around it with a hollow intelligence.

TITLE OVER:

AUTUMN

The crow alights.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist wakes suddenly. Tense, sharp breaths. Milja asleep beside him. At rest. The door to Kathryn's seed room open. Otherwise calm.

He gets his feet on the ground and runs thumb against forehead, kneading out a few creases.

He absently looks at his thumb in the stovelight; healed, a thin scar showing.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Survivalist makes his way across the plot. The night is moonless and jet-black dark, but he knows the way by memory.

EXT. THE HEAPS - NIGHT

The compost heaps give a warmth in the chill air. Survivalist unbuttons and pisses into a pile.

He sighs, looking up at the pinhead jewels of the full dark sky.

His piss patters out.

He buttons up...

... Something small DARTS past him.

Small, perhaps a fox or sleepless hare.

He looks around, on edge. The forest night's noisy silence.

An owl, somewhere.

But in the distance... a flicker of light, dancing like a dim spark.

Survivalist's night vision focusses: torchlight. The one beam, swaying between trees. Coming this way.

Then another... as his eyes adapt to their range, about fifty metres away, he sees three, four... SIX beam lights flickering in the dark. The torchbearers are walking in an even, disciplined formation.

Survivalist bolts to the cabin.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Through the door, he grabs the shotgun, opens the seed room door wide.

INT. CABIN - SEED ROOM - NIGHT

Drowsy but fast, Kathryn lays hands on the machete. Survivalist raises a quick finger to his lips. Shh...

He pulls out the seed drawer and empties the envelopes of seeds into a rucksack.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Survivalist wakes Milja, puts her shirt in her hands.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - NIGHT

Survivalist nudges the door open, slinging rucksack over shoulders. He uses his hand mirror to scan rightward, to the heaps.

Torch beams flicker onto the edge of the plot. The dim hum of six dynamo-crank torches.

He sidesteps in the opposite direction, back pressed close to the cabin. Kathryn, Milja half-dressed, follow. She looks back to see...

Torchlight sweeping across the cabin's front and falling on...

... empty space on the cabin's foot ledge.

The three run from the cabin towards the tall trees overlooking the farm.

Survivalist is nimble, scaling the bark of the tree quickly.

Kathryn follows, experienced tree climber from youth.

Milja is next. Her feet scrape against the bark, searching for purchase in the knuckles of dead branches.

Light grows brighter from the edge of the cabin... torch light passes through front windows and side windows onto the grass in front of them.

Milja gets a hand hold on a lean branch. It creaks...

Bare torch light their side of the cabin now. Shadows of men in halos of light. Army fatigues and outdoor wear and backpacks. Well fed physiques.

(CONTINUED)

Milja reaches for a thicker branch.

Her current branch hold BENDS...

... SNAPS

... Her FALLING hand

... GRABBED by Survivalist.

He's holding onto a branch with his other hand, with hardly any foothold.

A torch beam flashes through the branches. They sway and rustle in a gentle breeze.

Sweat beads on Survivalist's forehead glitter in the bounced torch light...

But the torch-bearer hasn't seen anything, and his torch beam sinks to ground level again.

Survivalist manages to lift Milja to within an arm's grasp of another, stronger branch... she gets a handhold. Then her foot finds some purchase.

They wait in the trees.

Milja, cat's eyes reflective, looks at Survivalist, fixated on the raiders destroying the crop, shotgun ready.

Her stare is broken by a distant CLAP and clatter.

A male SCREAM echoes in the night...

Torches angle downhill, where a static beam shines through the trees, discarded by its carrier.

A few converge and follow the screams to source downhill.

Kathryn leans towards Survivalist.

KATHRYN

(whispered)

Bigger game?

He keeps his eyes on the torches pouring over the land. Hands dipping into the earth, pulling and packing produce.

MATCH FADE TO:

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

The farmland is wrecked; torn-up, ransacked, clods of earth pattered along the walkways of the beds.

Survivalist walks along the banks of the trampled soil. The seed bed has been half-pulled up trying to find edibles.

Kathryn checks the other beds, seeing what's still below earth, what's salvageable.

Milja clears some of the damage.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Kathryn and Survivalist step inside to inspect the cabin.

Ransacked: tossed bed, pulled out shelves, scattered books. The articles of Linda Tallis, torn on the ground.

But their eyes are drawn to the back wall... *all the tools still on their hinges.*

In the tumult of the cabin... completely out of place.

EXT. CABIN, SIDE - DAY

Survivalist and Kathryn lift a tarpaulin from boxes at the side of the farm. They are covered in a moist, peat-like substance. Root vegetables underneath.

SURVIVALIST

What's still in the ground, and this... we got about six weeks... if we ration, we forage.

KATHRYN

Six weeks? Catch crops won't be ready for eight, nine at least.

SURVIVALIST

Would have been enough for one.

KATHRYN

You should have saved the cherries.

Gallows humour.

Survivalist lifts a potato out from storage. He sniffs it, turns it round: a WIREWORM coils on the underside, slinking back into a burrow-hole. He pinches the end before it escapes and pulls it out.

SURVIVALIST

They'll be coming back.

He crushes the worm in his hand.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

That's why they left the tools.
When we've grown more food...
they'll be back.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Thin portions of stew are divided between the three of them by Survivalist.

They eat in silence: a pall of quiet desperation has fallen over the room.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

The damage has been cleared. The three are planting seeds at intervals. Methodical, but with quiet urgency.

MATCH FADE TO:

Several weeks later. Tender leaves from root plants are pricking out of the soil.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja serves a foraged meal. Mushrooms, nuts, some spuds from stores to fill it out.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY (LATER)

The door to the seed room is open; Kathryn lies on the ground, holding her knees.

Milja's head rests on the table. She looks up -

Survivalist, standing on the bed and holding the roof, running his fingers along the grooves of wood.

SURVIVALIST

What sort of mushrooms were they?

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Milja inspects her period rag. She turns it, again and again: it is clean.

Disconcerted, she puts it back in her underwear.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Survivalist hand sweeps across the bed.

He wakes more fully; he is alone.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

A pool of watery sickle on the ground.

Milja is on her hunkers, staring at it, holding her stomach.

SURVIVALIST (OFF)

You OK?

She turns; Survivalist stands in the doorway. He leans over her shoulders, squares up the vomit.

SURVIVALIST

The hunger... we need to try and forage more.

She nods, then stands and wipes her mouth with the back of her hand.

INT. CABIN - DAY

Survivalist is bare-chest, inspecting himself with a hand-mirror.

Ribs stark against tight skin.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist slots a single shell into the breach of the shotgun. His actions are slow and leaden.

He stalks through the forest, looking up at the brown leaves hanging onto bare branches...

... A shutter of movement

He swings the gun up.

A CROW moves between branches.

He follows it.

It leaps, flies to another tree.

Survivalist follows the crow, moving quiet as he can not to startle.

(CONTINUED)

He sees the crow resting on a branch. He raises his shotgun to eye the shot - but it's not very clean, branch and straggling autumn leaves in the way.

He starts sidestepping to get a cleaner angle.

A SNAP - somewhere else in the forest.

His gun pivots down and around...

Kathryn's hunched figure, back to him, in the distance. She is crouched at one of the mantraps, which she has get off with a stick.

She rubs a mash of berries against the trigger of a poacher trap. She sets a bed of hazelnuts on top it, using the mash as a loose adhesive.

He walks towards her, his steps still hunter quiet in the familiar forest.

She opens the jaws of the trap again, trying to reset it.

Survivalist is a few metres from her now, sight unseen. She struggles with the stiff mechanism, trying to lock it open in place.

She is prone - a kick and her head would lock in the jaws. She gasps as she reaches for the locking mechanism of the jaws...

Her head turns - she looks at him.

He lowers the gun quickly and pitches in. They reset the trap quickly.

She is so tired she can only sit beside it, hunger having drained her of endurance.

He inspects the bait.

KATHRYN

A bit of meat... we could make it. With the protein.

SURVIVALIST

Traps are too big. Only thing I've caught in there walked on two legs.

She watches as he walks back to his hunting spot and surveys the trees.

The crow has gone.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

The three inspect the plants.

They dig up root vegetables, babies really, checking to see if any are edible yet.

Survivalist shows an immature onion to Kathryn, seeking a second opinion. She shakes her head.

Milja looks at them. They're too fixed on inspecting the earth to notice her take a pair of wirecutters from her jeans.

She cuts a piece of mesh out of a pest barrier.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Milja lies awake, staring at the oven stove, gently burning for night-time heat. Moonlight streams through the windows.

She slips her feet out of bed onto the ground. Checks Survivalist. He hasn't stirred.

She steps across the floor, light feet barely creaking the boards.

A glance through her the gap in the door to her mother's room: Kathryn lies sleeping on her back, hands unconsciously crossed on stomach.

Milja sits cross-legged in front of the stove.

She pulls the wire from her trousers. Opens the stove door a crack. Heats the wire.

It is soon red hot.

She takes it out, holds a silent penance as it cools.

She dabs it against the back of her hand - warm, not burning.

She lies back on the floor and opens her legs. Uses her fingers to feel inside herself.

She holds the wire in front of her opening... hesitating. Fear of pain perhaps. Fear of the risks.

She begins moving the wire inside her. Slow. Hesitant, guided by her fingers.

She holds the wire still, at the threshold.

Deep breaths.

(CONTINUED)

Through the windows, the sounds of
... creaking oaks
... leaves finding voice in the rushes of wind.
She pushes the wire deeper...
Then PULLS it out.
Panicked, frightened breaths.
She throws it against the cabin wall.
Her sits up and dips head into hands; her body trembles in
the gloom with mute sobs.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kathryn inspects the trap. The bait trigger has been
licked clean, but the trap is unsprung.

Suddenly fatigued, she sits and puts her head in hands.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja and Kathryn are awake and lying on the ground,
looking at the ceiling. Hunger gnawed cheeks, shallow,
lethargic breath. Hunger nudging them awake. Hunger
forcing whispered words between lips.

KATHRYN
There's food enough for two.

Kathryn looks at Milja, holds a hand to her cheek.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
You could shave him tomorrow.

Milja looks at her mother.

She shakes her head.

Kathryn breaks her glance and looks to the ceiling again.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Then we leave.

MILJA
No.

KATHRYN
You have to do it. For both of
us.

(CONTINUED)

MILJA
(repeating)
For both of us.

Milja stares back at the ceiling. Works through an idea.

MILJA (cont'd)
I could cook a meal.

KATHRYN
A meal?

MILJA
With mushrooms.

Kathryn thinks it through.

KATHRYN
It would take time.

MILJA
We could go for a walk. For a
day, or two.

Milja's eyes are wet, shimmering with thought.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Milja steps through the forest in a crinkled summer dress, faint and slow on her feet with hunger. She holds a container... inside are a few mushrooms, nuts.

In a clearing ahead, a corridor of light falls on a troop of white mushrooms.

She steps forward and picks one. She carefully inspects it... a DEATH CAP...

She sets it in her dress pocket, and begins to pick the rest.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Milja cooks on the wood stove. She adds chopped mushrooms and nuts to the bubbling mix. An onion and three spuds float around in the watery mix - all they can spare to fill it out.

Without a word, Survivalist enters. Thin as we've ever seen him. He hovers at her shoulder, spoons through the mix.

SURVIVALIST
Good finds.

(CONTINUED)

She gives him a forced smile. Shrugs him off gently as he squeezes her arm.

He sits by the window and looks into the distant final ember of sunset of an Indian summer night.

The stew bubbles quietly.

Milja removes the special variety from her pocket and begins to chop them.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
This was my wife's favourite time
of year.

As he remembers...

Kathryn walks in, setting a torch by the sill - she's been foraging past nightfall. She sets down her finds on a small bowl on the table.

Milja sets three portions of stew on the table.

Kathryn unconsciously eyes the mushrooms in Survivalist's bowl. He sees her looking.

KATHRYN
She always scoops from the bottom
for you.

Milja gives another fixed, hollow smile as she sits at Survivalist's side.

Kathryn digs in. Milja as well, but she's forcing herself.

Survivalist is famished but without appetite. He spoons the food.

He lifts a spoonful of steaming liquid to his mouth. Blows it gently.

Then sups it.

Kathryn, somewhat relieved, continues eating. Milja's eyes remain fixed in front of her. She eats mechanically, without appetite.

FADE TO:

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Kathryn wakes alone - golden, first light seeps through the window. She gathers some clothing into a bag.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Kathryn steps quietly into the room.

Milja lies awake, under Survivalist's arms. Her eyes are red with tears. She doesn't move as her mother packs a few handfuls of vegetables from the stove into her bag.

Kathryn indicates for Milja to get up.

She remains in bed.

Kathryn steps towards her.

KATHRYN

We don't have time...

Milja remains perfectly still, except for her welling gaze...

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Get up.

Kathryn clamps a hand on Milja's arm and begins to pull her when-

Survivalist wakes and sits up. He's drowsy but quickly cogent.

SURVIVALIST

... What's going on?

She hesitates. Something deep within her ajar...

KATHRYN

We were just...

She holds her stomach. A wave of nausea. The water in Milja's eyes runs down the side of her face.

Kathryn shakes her head.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

You didn't.

Survivalist sees the bag lying on the ground by the stove.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

You couldn't-

She runs to the doorway and leans outside - her fingers rush into throat and throw up vomit.

Survivalist races out of bed and rushes to her side. She gets her breath back.

(CONTINUED)

SURVIVALIST
What did she give you?

KATHRYN
Too late.

SURVIVALIST
Tell me.

KATHRYN
Mushrooms.

Kathryn tries to retch again.

SURVIVALIST
When?

KATHRYN
Supper. When else?

He looks at the bag, again, then at Milja.

Puts it together.

Kathryn sits down on the porch, clutching her stomach and rocking gently.

Survivalist sweeps to the book shelf and pulls a reference book.

SURVIVALIST
There's a remedy.

KATHRYN
A hospital. With a power supply.
And staff.

She speaks with a gallows, drowsy lucidity.

SURVIVALIST
Milk of thistle.

He lowers a page entry to Kathryn's view and shows the picture, description.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
But none in this forest. Not that
I've seen...

Survivalist spreads an old National Trust map across the table. Kathryn pores over it with him; pencilled annotations and markings.

Milja steps into the seed room and shuts the door behind her - a brief, perhaps final look between her and her mother.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

These parts I know, back of my hand. I've never seen it.

He indicates most of the map within a half-day's walking distance. Then he indicates other areas - near flatland, forest's edge.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)

These places... there's at least a chance.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist leads Kathryn through the woods. They coil wind-up dynamo torches to illuminate the dark forest floor.

EXT. HIGHER GROUND, CLEARING - DAY

Survivalist orients himself with a map and compass.

A sound - he turns to find Kathryn retching again, almost doubled over in pain. He goes to her side and holds her up.

She waves him away; *keep going.*

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - DAY

Trudging through dry forest mud. Both prematurely tired because of starvation rations.

Kathryn takes, slow zombiefied glances at the ground.

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - DAY (LATER)

Kathryn is slower now, her skin taking on a ghastly lividity all over. Her head twitches towards each dark nook of the forest.

Survivalist is feverishly scanning the ground.

She wheezes - takes a hard, stuttering cough. She pulls her fist away from her mouth and finds it flecked with blood.

He locks an arm around hers. Pulls her back into motion.

FADE TO:

A slanted forest-line, overlooking a valley. They've stopped sweeping through the forest and inspect the area separately.

(CONTINUED)

Survivalist stoops as a lush patch.

Then he hears Kathryn's voice.

KATHRYN (OFF)
Over here.

He finds her crouched on an outlook. He looks at what's in front of her, to her feet. She shakes her head - not there. *There*.

He looks out to the horizon.

Reacts.

We do not see what they see.

KATHRYN
When was the last time you were here?

SURVIVALIST
This far from the farm... four, five years.

KATHRYN
World's beginning to put itself together again.

SURVIVALIST
(...)
Do you think they have it?

KATHRYN
Milk of thistle?
(shakes)
No. We're too far south. Don't think there's any in this forest.

He stares at her.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
But there is something I would have expected them to have, which they don't.

He looks back into the distance. Methodically studying the details.

SURVIVALIST
Bean poles.

She nods gently.

KATHRYN
You read that book I lent you?
(...)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Remember the story of the Red Queen. She always had to keep running as fast as she could just to stay on the board.

With effort, she gets onto her feet again.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The light is dying now. They walk into an ancient part of the forest - old tall trees, long-fallen trunks, dark wood and deadness.

Kathryn stops and rests against a tree, exhausted and racked with pain.

KATHRYN

Worse and worse... how much more...

Her breath is a rasp.

SURVIVALIST

Much, much more.

She looks at him.

Her hand feels a breast, a breast pocket. She reaches inside and gives him something in the palm of his hand.

KATHRYN

This how you know?

He opens his hand: *the diamond ring*.

He looks at her, long and hard. Her eyes hold on him; no real fear, just curiosity, beneath everything else.

SURVIVALIST

Our son was starving.

KATHRYN

I saw his bones.

He nods, solemn.

SURVIVALIST

It was too late anyway.. he was too far gone.

KATHRYN

... You let her go all the way?

SURVIVALIST

Most of it.

KATHRYN

But not all.

He shakes his head.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Good.

She walks to a fallen tree, and sits down on it; her hunched back to him.

He watches; a thin trail of smoke emerges. She is smoking her last cigarettes.

Her resignation hits him hard.

Then he takes some steps away from her.

Her shoulders remain hunched, seemingly incurious as to what he's doing behind her.

He raises the gun, gently opening the breech.

KATHRYN (OFF)

Don't.

She turns her head.

KATHRYN

Don't waste the shell. Save it for her.

He stands there uncertainly.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

Have you got your knife?

For a moment he doesn't remember whether he has or not. Her stare concentrates his mind. He takes it out from his leg strap and walks it over to her. She shakes her head.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

I need you to do it.

He sits beside her. She stubs the cigarette she's been smoking and takes out her last one, dropping the packet.

KATHRYN (cont'd)

When I've finished this.

She smokes the fastest cigarette of her life. Ash drops on her thighs. The paper burns so fast she can almost see it creeping towards her.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
You know why she called you
Lenny?
(. . .)
It was the name of our dog.

She laughs gently, but a shot of pain cuts her off.

She inspects the short cigarette between her fingers.
Perhaps a drag or two left.

Fuck it. She flicks the cigarette-

And he GRABS her right hand and SLASHES open her wrist.

A thin spray of arterial blood hisses over her face, his.
She grabs his hands.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Look at me.

He can feel her blood lapping onto his wrists. He isn't
looking, he won't-

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Look at me.

He looks up into her eyes. He's the one frightened - he
doesn't want to watch, doesn't want to be this close. She
smiles.

KATHRYN (cont'd)
Don't be scared.

She leans towards him. Her eyelids becoming heavy and
slow. She gently presses her lips onto his. He's stiff
with horror, fear, then... softens.

He presses his lips back.

Their eyes shut...

They part lips. He opens his eyes.

Her's are still closed. The blood has stopped oozing from
her wrist.

She slumps onto his shoulder. He cradles her gently in his
arms.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist trudges through the undergrowth. He has been
walking for some time - the blood has dried to his
clothing.

He stops - his eyes fix on something on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

A dead rabbit lies crushed in the tight jaws of a mantrap.

Something SNAPS nearby.

Survivalist edges towards the sound, shotgun in hands...

He crouches.

Another trap; a SECOND RABBIT is clenched in oversize metal teeth.

He cranks head to match the tilt of the rabbit's head, which has been half-decapitated. It hangs by a sinew.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja startles as the door swings open. Survivalist enters - blood spattered- holding the two dead rabbits. He doesn't look at her.

She watches as he sets the rabbit on the stove-side surface, then washes his blood-caked hands, face.

She sits on the bed quietly.

He starts to skin them with a knife.

FADE TO:

Rabbit bones lie picked clean on plates at the table.

Survivalist is awake beside Milja in bed. They avoid looking at each other.

Milja takes Survivalist's arm and rolls it over her chest. He pulls back, taking it as an unwanted advance, but she flattens out his hand on her belly.

He rubs it, his hand dipping between her legs, but she tugs it back up and flattens it on her belly again.

She moves the hand around slowly, until he finds the significance.

He looks up at her - eyes glazed, perhaps afraid- and then withdraws his hand.

They lie in silence, not touching anymore, both still awake.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Survivalist and Milja drag Kathryn's body. Milja pulls the arms, and Survivalist, trailing from the front, hoists the legs and most of the weight.

The body doesn't weigh very much, but it still bears heavily on their tender, malnourished muscles.

Survivalist stops. He sets down the legs and breathes out his exertion. Milja takes the opportunity to let go of her mother's arms and turn away.

SURVIVALIST
We can't stay here.

She looks over her shoulder.

MILJA
There's nowhere else to go.

He shakes his head.

SURVIVALIST
There's a settlement.
(...)
She found a settlement. Near forest's edge. Big enough to defend itself against raiders. Well-run farm. Crop rotation.

Her eyes draw towards the body again.

MILJA
Would they take us in?

SURVIVALIST
They didn't have any beanpoles.

MILJA
So?

SURVIVALIST
Maybe they don't have any beans.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

They eat a thin, adequate soup; food previously split between three divided between two.

Milja forks a loose bean on her plate.

MILJA
What if they get their protein elsewhere?

He scrapes his plate clean. The problem gnaws at him.

(CONTINUED)

SURVIVALIST

I'll go alone and make the offer.
If it's a trap, they won't push
hard on the trade.

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

Survivalist pours a teaspoon of seeds into a polythene bag.

EXT. FARM PLOT - DAY

Survivalist uses a trowel to dig a sapling bean stalk out of the ground.

He scoops some fresh beans from a mature stalk, bags them.

Milja brings him the open Bible and he coat-pockets the shells.

SURVIVALIST

Back before sundown.

MILJA

...and if you're not?

SURVIVALIST

You can keep the farm.

He walks into the forest.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja walks around the empty cabin. A sense of being completely alone for miles...

She takes a book from a shelf...

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

She sees a child's branding on the inside, in carefully elided red Biro: 'KATHRYN ROCHE, AGE 11'.

She drops the book-

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A SPADE hits the forest floor. It bumps along the ground as it is dragged by Milja. She keeps her eyes on the trail ahead, retracing a route from memory.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

Milja sits by her mother's body. It is face down in the dirt where it was abandoned. Milja places her hand on her mother's neck - she rubs patterns of hair against the cold, livid skin.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

A shovel SLAMS into the dirt. Tough soil in this part. Milja's face is slick with sweat, smeared with dirt when she's wiped it with the back of her hand. She could find softer soil, but she wants the pain.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (LATER)

Kathryn's body lies in the ground, face up, arms crossed. In death, her skin's lividity almost appears golden.

Milja holds a brilliant, purple-back beetle in her hands. It scurries around the cage of her fingers. She sets it on her mother's chest.

Then she slings the first scoop of dirt over the body.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT - DAY

Milja waits on the cabin porch, scanning the perimeter of the farm. The sun is fading in the sky.

Survivalist emerges from the tree line.

He walks up the plot to the cabin.

He steps past her, not making eye contact.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Milja follows him through the doorway. He eats the cooled food.

SURVIVALIST

They want to test-bed the seeds,
make sure they're good. Saplings
and beans weren't enough.

MILJA

That's good, though? Shows
they're for real.

SURVIVALIST

They're for real all right.

Milja notes his tone. Tense. Brooding.

(CONTINUED)

MILJA
Two, three weeks then?

He looks at her for the first time.

SURVIVALIST
And they'll only take one of us.

INT. CABIN, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

They lie in bed, clothed and close for warmth.

SURVIVALIST
The beans are worth one extra
mouth. That's the way they see
it. I offered everything. The
guns. The tools.

She looks at him, quiet...

MILJA
What about me?

He meets her glance; a dim echo of Kathryn's offer.

SURVIVALIST
(shakes)
They're religious. Polygamists, I
think. Perhaps they'd take you as
a wife, but not with me.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

They walk together, eyes pinned to the forest floor as
they scan for food to forage.

MILJA
We go back. When they've seeded.
Together. We plead. We beg them.

SURVIVALIST
They're hard people.

MILJA
They believe. They want to help
us.

SURVIVALIST
They're alive and they believe
because they've done things to
stay alive... they need there to
be a forgiver out there,
somewhere.

Survivalist stops. His nostrils suck in deep drags of the
smell. Milja follows, scans the surroundings.

Survivalist cocks the shotgun.

Survivalist sniffs the source; a patch of wet urine on a tree.

They scan the three sixty forest horizon - the buzz and saw of insects and birds - but no slinking shadows, no white of eye in the gloom.

He makes a pistol sign with index finger and palm - *do you have it with you?*

She shakes her head.

He pulls his knife from leg-strap, gives it to her. She gets used to the balance in her hand quickly.

Survivalist studies branches, the crush of vegetation on the forest floor. In the dirt, footprints. Bootmarks. Multiple steps, indentations.

He raises a hand to Milja: two fingers.

He continues scouring the floor. A flurry of footprints on a bare batch of dirt.

Raises three fingers.

Four.

Stops counting. Looks at her. They know who they are.

She whispers, breath-loud but firecracker loud in the new silence...

MILJA

The seeds.

EXT. CABIN, EDGE OF FARM - DAY

Survivalist holds out his mirror:

He can see the RAIDERS ripping up food from the plot. They are clearer in daylight - the half-camo outfits, perhaps robbed from soldiers; perhaps they are ex-soldiers. Rough-hewn tattoos snaking over most of their skin, strange, amateur piercings - hardy and dangerous in a world of infections.

One of them has a HOBBLE from the sprung trap in the last raid.

The leader, WHISTLER is an obese man - a particularly unnatural sight in this age - and issues directions to his other men in a shrill, shepherd-like whistle. He directs a man with a sledgehammer - SLEDGE - to the cabin.

EXT. CABIN, REAR - DAY

Stealth-quiet, Survivalist and Milja run from the tree line to the back window of the cabin.

Survivalist takes a small multi-tool from his jacket and begins loosening a screw on the back window's protective metal grill. Milja keeps watch at one side of the cabin, knife poised for a quick stab to the throat if needed.

The cabin wood trembles from the relentless, regular pounding of the sledgehammer.

One screw drops into Survivalist's hand. Two screws.

The sledgehammer BASHES into the front door. Splinters, cracks appear in the panelling by the lock.

Milja and Survivalist gently remove the metal grating and set it on the grass. Milja hands him the knife. He grips the handle backwards and puts his coat over the top to soften the blow against the glass.

The sledge POUNDS against the tattered door, the binding wood about to snap...

Survivalist raises and lowers the knife in sync to the sledgehammer blows.

One. Two...

The front door CRACKS OPEN-

Survivalist SMASHES the window in.

The raider with the SLEDGE bursts inside the cabin.

Survivalist and Milja keep eyes pinned to each side of the cabin, waiting for any inquisitors.

They can hear main room being ransacked.

...

No one comes through the seed room door.

Survivalist uses the coat to pick shards of glass out of the windows.

When it's clear, he crouches and Milja steps into his lap. He BOOSTS her up through the sill, and she eases herself into:

INT. CABIN, SEED ROOM - DAY

As she lands on the ground, the door rattles - someone at the handle.

She pulls her mother's machete and hands it out the window to Survivalist. Then she takes the seed trays and empties them into a rucksack.

The door begins to BANG. A boot is trying to kick it in.

Milja passes the rucksack through the window.

A SLAM against the seed room door. A sledgehammer being swung against it.

Milja leans out the window... Survivalist takes her in his arms. She slides against the bottom of the sill, a rogue piece of glass *slicing* against her belly.

The LOCK smashes whole into the room, a piece of wood still attached.

The door is kicked open.

Sledge steps in. He sees the upturned seed shelf, the broken window.

INT CUT EXT. CABIN, REAR & INT. CABIN SEED ROOM

Survivalist and Milja cower under the window. Milja presses hands over stomach to stem the blood.

Sledge tears open shelves and knocks over seed trays, scouring with irritable impatience.

Blood drips from the rogue glass shard onto the cabin floor.

Survivalist, Milja both can barely breathe. Sledge's nasal respiration feels like it's on the back of their necks.

But Sledge loses interest in the room and steps back into the main cabin.

They hear him move away. Still hunkered down, Survivalist straps the backpack onto Milja. They walk fast to the forest.

Survivalist stops and PIVOTS the shotgun to the cabin behind them.

Hobble stands at the corner. He is rabbit in headlights at the two barrels of shotgun pointing at his chest.

(CONTINUED)

Survivalist lifts his hand off the barrel and raises a finger... KEEP QUIET. Then he steps sideways to keep Hobble in blast range if he tries to bolt around the corner. But Hobble is too slow-witted to move.

Survivalist steps towards him and waves the shotgun downwards. Hobble gets on his knees, drops his knife. Survivalist kicks it a few feet away.

A stand-off.

If Survivalist fires, they're heard. He walks away, Hobble will signal the alarm.

In a whisper...

SURVIVALIST
Augustus.

Survivalist looks into the eyes.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
My name is Augustus.

MILJA
(absent, repeating)
Augustus?

SURVIVALIST
Always hated it.

Hobble looks uncertainly at the exchange.

SURVIVALIST (cont'd)
You better get going.

MILJA
What about you?

SURVIVALIST
... I'll catch up.

Milja moves quickly to forest's edge.

She stops and turns.

Takes one last look at him.

THEN RUNS...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Milja's feet are fast against the ground, legs snapping dead wood and hands snapping branches from her face.

EXT. CABIN, REAR - DAY

Hobble stares at Survivalist with a grim forbearance. They both know the way this is going to end.

Survivalist glances at Hobble's leg - still wrapped in a makeshift support.

He smirks.

Voices the other side of the cabin. Missing one of their number.

A WHISTLE sounds.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Milja, running... she steps on a fallen tree, leaps forward into the forest.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Survivalist looks at the side of the cabin.

An eerie silence.

He looks from one corner of the cabin to the other.

...

Sees a flicker of movement on the ground at one corner - *the shadow of man and rifle drawing closer.*

He looks back at Hobble.

Pulls the trigger.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A GUNSHOT echoes through the forest.

Birds take flight from the trees above.

Milja stops dead for a moment, panting, exhausted.

DISTANT GUNFIRE, rifle rounds.

She runs again.

FADE TO:

EXT. A FOREST STREAM - DAY

Clear water runs over rocks.

Milja's hands scoop up water. She brings her palms to her belly wound, cleaning it out.

Inspects it: the blood is beginning to congeal.

She becomes aware of the uneasy tranquility of the scene; her alone in the water, light through the trees, sound of birds.

She stands and picks up her belongings.

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - DAY

Branches pull back to reveal:

THE DISTANT SETTLEMENT.

A wide encirclement of fencing, wire, tents and guard posts. Take away the modern anachronisms, and it could pass for an iron-age encampment.

Milja passes from the trees into the open fields and walks towards the settlement.

....

TWO GUARDS stand to arms in their observation post and raise rifles.

Milja walks towards them, her mother's machete raised abreast, her free hand raised in welcome.

EXT. CABIN, FARM PLOT - DAY

Raiders build a pyre.

A raider strips Hobble's face-blasted body.

Another scrapes a long stick *sharp at both ends*.

Survivalist lies prostrate on the ground, barely alive, his skin bloated and bloody. Raiders pull his boots and socks off, then strip the rest.

Survivalist's eyes push beyond the shadows tearing at his clothes... towards his outstretched hand.

He is clutching the diamond ring.

A boot STAMPS on his wrist.

A gloved hand PULLS the ring from his fingers.

The pyre is LIT.

EXT. THE SETTLEMENT - DAY

Milja waits under the FIRST GUARD, raised above her on the observation post. Beyond the wire-mesh fence is a central tent, where the rest of clan are in conference.

MILJA

What's happening?

FIRST GUARD

They're taking a vote. Shouldn't be long.

He smiles awkwardly at her. There is a wary politeness between them, both unsure whether she will be accepted.

He sees Milja's instinctive hand clasp.

FIRST GUARD

Are you pregnant?

Milja is unsure how to answer. The Guard smiles.

FIRST GUARD (cont'd)

Don't worry, we're Christians here.

He clutches the cross on his necklace, as proof.

FIRST GUARD (cont'd)

When are you expecting?

MILJA

Six months, I think.

FIRST GUARD

(repeating)

Six months.

(...)

Do you know what you'll call it?

She is looking to the horizon.

There is a small trail of smoke from a distant fire.

MILJA

If it's a boy.

The SECOND GUARD emerges from the tent. He walks down the path towards them. He holds a scrap of paper.

As Milja waits for the news -

CUT TO BLACK

(CONTINUED)

THE END